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THE DEVELOPMENT OF
WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

(Three Oral Histories)

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The histories of Third World peoples in the United States are oftentimes treated as phenomenon outside the context of U.S. historical development. But the perspective taken in this paper is that the histories of Third World peoples, as with any group of people in this society, are intimately, and undeniably interwoven into the very fabric of the development of the United States. The Filipino American experience, for example, has to be seen within the context of capitalist development in America. Were it not for the fact that capitalist expansion forced the U.S. to imperialist acts of aggression in Third World countries, the U.S. would not have been involved in the Spanish American War, would not have taken possession of the Philippines and Filipinos would not have immigrated to the U.S. in the numbers that came. The point being that U.S. history, Philippine history and consequently Filipino American History are very much intertwined and have been since the turn of the twentieth century. Yet, there is very little evidence of this from presently written historical accounts.

In order to fully grasp that the history of Filipinos in America is not an isolated case, but is linked to the development of capitalism in America, the format of this paper will be to provide descriptive historical background juxtaposed against the concrete experiences of Filipino immigrants. This format is used to portray the history of Filipinos in the U.S. in its proper relationship to the rest of U.S. history.

Oral interviews will be used to collect the subjective aspect of this study. Since written history has had an over-reliance on public record as its chief source of information,¹ Filipinos as is the case for many ethnic groups who have been victimized by racist interpretations of history, are overlooked merely because they are not adequately represented in public records. The method of documentation through oral history has in the past few years become increasingly accepted by historians, anthropologists, novelists, political scientists, journalists, and in many other fields.²

Oral history used in concert with historical research is an effective method of understanding the relationship of a particular grouping to the historical phenomenon of the larger society. Because Filipino history in the U.S. goes back only 80 years, this method can be particularly effective. Many of the early immigrants have survived to tell their story. While it is true that many people seldom think to chronicle their own life experiences or sum them up to themselves periodically, much valuable information can be drawn out through the interview process making it the researchers task, then, to objectify the findings and place them within the correct historical and theoretical framework.

Case histories provide the factual data by which theories and historical analysis can be tested. Both processes -- the development of historical theories and verification through case studies -- are necessary and complimentary to each other. Each must be measured against the other to determine their overall correctness and value. As with all natural and social phenomenon knowledge is advanced through examining the individual manifestations while also attempting to perceive

and understand the whole of which they are a part.³

The general experience of Filipinos in the United States can be understood through a study of particular experiences. These three Filipinos, Al Masigat, Leo Lorenzo and Philip Vera Cruz, were selected for this study for their contributions as organizers in either the labor movement of the 1930's, or the rebirth of farm labor organizing in the wake of the civil rights movement of the 1960's. It is assumed that as conscious forces actively speaking out for the right of their fellow workers they have a good basis for remembering what their experiences were as well as the general condition of working people at that time.

Leo and Al were active in the unionizing of Alaska cannery workers in the 1930's. This union, based primarily in Seattle, Washington, was the first successful union in this industry. It was started by Filipinos and strengthened with the support of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), then the Committee for Industrial Organizations. The third interviewee, Philip Vera Cruz, was involved in the farm labor movement of the 1960's, primarily in the victorious forging of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC). He was an organizer for the UFW which brought Filipinos and Mexicans together to make farm labor history with the great Delano Grape Strike of 1965.

In chronicling their experiences numerous questions emerge which in turn reflect the historical phenomenon of the period: how did these particular individuals come to participate in labor organizing? What happened to facilitate the transformation of three men who were objectively petty bourgeois in their aspirations for professional careers

and higher education (to be doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.) to abandon these aspirations for the cause of the worker? When they arrived in the U.S. they were not yet working class conscious forces. What were the conditions that moved them into the arena of struggle between grower and farm laborer, the agricultural capitalist and the field worker? How much of a role did racism in the U.S. play in their transformation? What was their response to contradictions they found in American society?

The answers to these questions reveal not only the unique experiences of each individual studied here, but the common threads that tie their lives together with the lives of thousands of others who shared this historical period. What was experienced in these three cases was a process of proletarianization whereby their petty bourgeois aspirations formed in the Philippines were transformed under the hard realities of a racist, exploitative social structure. They could not remain unaffected by the conditions that surrounded them. They arrived expecting instant opportunities and access to professional training, but were faced instead with blatant exploitation in the midst of an already critical economic crisis that forced them to accept what menial work they could get and abandon their hopes for a higher standard of living. This of course altered their class orientation in that they gravitated away from their petty bourgeois outlook toward a working class ideology. To grasp the direct relationship of this occurrence to the social and economic structure of society is to grasp the historical forces in operation in society and to gain insight to the eventual direction of history.

While this is a particular study of the experiences and contributions of three Filipino immigrants, this process of proletarianization, shared by most Third World immigrants to this country is a general phenomenon and as such has lessons for us all.

CHAPTER I

PRE-IMMIGRATION BACKGROUND

In order to systematically study the transformation that occurred in the lives of the subjects of this paper — Al Masigat, Leo Lorenzo, and Philip Vera Cruz — we have to view their histories within the context of their experiences both in the Philippines and in the U.S. And it follows that in order to understand their experiences in the Philippines we have to examine not only their personal backgrounds, but the historical events that directly and/or indirectly affected the particular historical period of their development.

Before reviewing the personal background of each interviewee, what will be covered is the historical framework within which their early development should be viewed. In this section I will briefly summarize the impact U.S. colonization had on the Philippine culture, as well as the unique role played by the educational system in fostering myths about both the Philippines and the United States.

IMPACT OF U.S. COLONIZATION

The cultural climate of the period prior to the immigration of our subjects was the product not so much of the internal evolution of the society, as the external pressures brought to bear by the spiralling development of capitalism in the U.S. and its subsequent need to extend its tentacles over the economies of underdeveloped countries in order to survive. U.S. domination of the culture of the Philippines, through the education system in particular, was purely ideological in purpose and

necessary for implementation of its plan of economic expansion.

At the turn of the 20th Century when U.S. history crosses paths with Philippine history, the U.S. was approaching a crisis in its capitalist development. It had advanced from a small industrial country to monopoly capitalism in the course of one hundred years, advancing well beyond other capitalist countries. In the process, the United States was saturating its own markets and the rate of profit, while still high, was increasing at a slower rate than in its earlier stages of development. Consequently, in order to assure the continued advancement of capitalism, new markets and methods for higher rates of profit had to be sought. This was accomplished by seeking more markets outside of the United States for surpluses that were going without buyers in the capitalist center. The U.S. saw in the Philippines the outlet it needed, not only as a place to dump U.S. goods, but a source of raw materials for the continued development of American industries.

American imperialism represented a new state in the history of capitalist expansion. Where the old colonialism plundered nations and disrupted their traditional economics, economic imperialism aimed to block the accumulation of capital, therefore blocking the creation of an industrial base in the colonies and semi-colonies. Increasingly, sophisticated economic exploitation replaced outright plunder as the modus operandi of colonialism. Consequently, economic development and underdevelopment were institutionalized as opposite sides of the same imperialist coin as the underdeveloped countries became appended to the monopoly economies of the imperialist powers.⁴

The effect of this form of colonialism was to slowly dissolve the

village economy and systematically inject the indigenous society with American trade and American ideas. The clash between the capitalist center (the U.S.) and the pre-capitalist periphery (the Philippines) was a large-scale cultural encounter, not merely an economic one.⁵ As people were transformed into economic actors, independent of prior social commitments to kin and neighbors, they became more separated from the social matrix. The society was being forced into a new culture where they had to learn how to maximize returns, minimize expenditures -- to buy cheap, sell dear, regardless of social obligations and social costs.

U.S. capitalism changed the mode of production in the Philippines and sought to redefine the social organization and break further the traditional operation of society. Its guiding principle was the redefinition of land, labor and wealth into commodities that would be produced not for their use, but for profit. This became the organizing principle of the society as a new kind of economics was being defined.

The "economic mentality" had made its entry upon the scene. This mentality brought with it certain socio-cultural side-effects; increasing inflexibility of land tenure, growth of individualism and slackening of extended family ties, greater class differentiation and conflict, intensified opposition between young and old, modern and conservatism; weakening of traditional authority and wavering of traditional social standards; even the growth of "protestant ethic" religious ideologies.

What was changed was not just a pattern of land use or a set of productive techniques, but a system of interrelated institutions, practices and ideas -- a "cultural core."⁶

ROLE OF EDUCATION

The role played by the educational system was particularly useful to the modern concept of colonialism. As the U.S. grasped the importance of ideological openness to U.S. presence in the Philippines, overt exploitation of the people gave way to the domination of key trusted institutions. What had been learned from past colonial experiences was that the same end could be accomplished through more subtle approaches. This was an evolutionary landmark in the science of exploitation, a more sophisticated form of the old relationship between colonialist and colonized -- neo-colonialism as we have since come to call it.

The introduction of the educational system by the U.S. had a specific colonial purpose. As Constantino, a Filipino historian put it, "... the molding of men's minds is the best means of conquest. Education, therefore serves as a weapon in wars of colonial conquest."⁷

The power of education as a tool of imperialism was never underestimated by the U.S. In fact, the Philippine educational system under U.S. colonialism was originally conceived as a military tactic to aid in the fight against the nationalist resistance.⁸ Commenting on a plan for public schools, General Arthur MacArthur, in charge of U.S. forces in the Philippines, told the Philippine Commission:

"I know of nothing in the Department of Administration that can contribute more in behalf of pacification than the immediate institution of a comprehensive system of education, such as recommended by the general superintendent.

"The matter is so closely allied to the exercise of military force in these islands that in my annual report I treated the matter as a military subject and suggested a rapid extension of educational facilities as an exclusively military measure."

The first thing that Americans turned their attention to in the

Philippines was the restructuring of the education system. Three weeks after the city of Manila was occupied by U.S. forces, seven public schools were opened, each handled by a soldier assigned to teach English under the supervision of the Reverend William McKinnon, Chaplain of the First California Volunteer Infantry.

On January 21, 1901, the Philippine Commission passed Act #74 which created the Department of Public Instruction in the Philippines and passed the responsibility of all schools from the military government to the civil government. It was also this act that made English the basis for all public school instruction and called for the recruitment of one thousand trained teachers from the United States for the Philippines.¹⁰

In planning the education of the Filipino, many important concepts furthering U.S. hegemony over the Filipino culture were incorporated. School children were subjected to American ideals and culture in order to discourage nationalism. Filipino children were taught that he and the Philippines was inferior as compared to American standards. The superiority of America and therefore American-made products was the "logic" cultivated among Filipinos, children especially, to promote the buying of "stateside" goods. "With American education, the Filipinos were not only learning a new language; they were not only forgetting their own language; they were starting to become a new type of American. American ways were slowly being adopted. Our consumption habits were molded by the influx of cheap American goods that came in duty-free. The pastoral economy was extolled because this conformed with the colonial economy that was being fostered. Our books extolled the Western nations as peopled by superior beings because they were capable of manufacturing things

that we never thought we were capable of producing"¹¹

LIFE IN THE PHILIPPINES

In this section of the paper each interviewee describes what his life was like in the Philippines, what his family situation was, his recollections of the town in which he was raised, what his hopes for his future were, and who or what influenced these aspirations. What emerges from their descriptions is a clear sense of the petty bourgeois influences on their lives in the Philippines, and the role the U.S.-dominated institutions played in affecting the direction they hoped to take.

As children of land-owning families who were also either merchants or professionals, the petty bourgeois influences are most obvious in both Al and Leo who are from the provincial capital of Ilocos Norte -- Laoag. Both describe their families as "not poor, but of the middle income," that is, owning enough land to lead them to believe that "everyone owned land". Leo's family operated the third largest general store in the city. Al's father was a career military man. In contrast, Philip's family, while not of the urban petty bourgeoisie were small land-owners in the barrio.* But in Philip's case, his family struggled to maintain him in the petty bourgeois life style of a student in a cosmopolitan setting. He essentially grew up in the urban center of his province and as a result internalized much of the petty bourgeois ideas of that sector of youth aspiring to be professionals.

What this meant for all three individuals was a lifestyle of relative comfort. As opposed to being exposed at an early age to the harsh

* The peasant, or person tied to the land, is objectively petty bourgeois in that they aspire to private ownership of land.

experiences of workers. Urban life also afforded them with much broader ranged experiences -- exposure to bourgeois democratic politics, American teachers, etc. -- which did much to reinforce their aspirations for professionalism.

Their families, excepting Philip's, were relatively secure financially. And all three shared a common desire for professional status, economically secure jobs, and social respectability. As aspiring professionals their day-to-day activities as students were oriented to the completion of their high school education and preparation for their future professional training. These opportunities were made available primarily through the efforts of their families for the eventual benefit of the whole family. Their exposure in the main was to American individual achievement and professional status.

*
AL MASIGAT: "I was born in Laoag in 1904, one of the biggest towns in the Philippines and also one of the biggest in population.

"Laoag is like other big cities. In politics we got the two party system.. the Nacionalista and, what is the other one now? ... I don't know the other. But when they are campaigning, we invite one candidate from one party and the candidate from the other party to come and have a debate. They were always doing that when I was there, see? It was very good, different than here. My grandfather was very active, in fact he was one of the leaders ... our house (was) the headquarters of that party in our barrio.

"Religion was still big, but not so big as before. The majority of the people were Catholic, another one is Protestant. So there are three big religions. The majority are Catholic, the Aglipay is next, and then the protestant. My family is Catholic.

*
Personal Interview with Al Masigat, July 14, 1978.

"There were few people in agriculture in that town although mostly all the Filipinos have some land ... They do not grow lots of vegetables for export to other places. They just plant in order to survive, to eat. Like if you have nothing and your neighbor has lots of tomatoes in his garden, then you can just go over there and ask for a tomato. I only know some people that did not own land ... Yet, people that did not have land, they also could get land. Our place, for example, we have land, but neither I nor my brothers nor my sisters can cultivate all the land so, what can you do?

"I was born in a family that's not very poor, but in the middle income. Like most families my parents' main concern was for the education of their children. Your parents when they want you to have an education, they do not let you work. In fact, we do not work much in there, only to help our parents in everyday life like carrying our drinking water or washing water.

"As the eldest and pet of the family I have to get a good education. My parents sent me to school at the early age of six or seven years in a Spanish system school.

"In my childhood I remember that my parents wanted their children to really have an education. If you are a very poor family ... you think this poor family does not want his boys or girls to go to school, too? No, they are going to break their backs for these people to go to school. That's the ambition of the Filipinos. The only reason why, I think Filipinos wanted to have an education was to be a teacher or to be a doctor. That's all, just those two. When you are a doctor, you are respected by the people and you get a little bit of money. That's what I think.

"But my own ambition was to be an officer in the Army because my father was one of the first Philippine scouts and I was raised in the army camp so that I wanted to fol-

low the footsteps of my father, but a higher rank than of my father because I wanted to be an officer. My two brothers wanted to be in the military too. One brother went into medicine, but he never finish. Both my brothers were killed in World War II.

"For myself, I completed high school in Laoag. I started school in the Spanish system, but then I decided to change to the American school when I was about 12 or 13.

"When I came into contact with the first pupil that entered the English (speaking) school, I was envious because I wanted to be in that kind of school instead of my present school. I found out that it was better than my present (Spanish-speaking) school. So instead of continuing my school, I went to the English school. I wanted to learn to speak English because in my neighborhood there were two American teachers about three houses away from my house. Whenever these two Americans pass our house, they always say hello to me and give me something, some kind of candy or anything they have in their hand. They are so friendly! I decided to myself that I (will) get out from the Spanish school because our teacher is too cruel, spanking the pupils and like that.

"One thing that encouraged me to come (to the U.S.) was my English teacher when I was in first year (high school). She overemphasized when she told me that in the U.S., you can pick gold in the streets. My goodness, I said to myself, 'Why not go in there?' And I also had three neighbors that came in this country, one of them was in the Navy and two of them came here as houseboys to some white people that were in the Philippines before ... When they send money to their parents, then I had an envious feeling, that if I go in there (U.S.) maybe I can find some job like that, or pick the gold that my teacher is telling me (about)."

LEO LORENZO: * "Well, back in the islands, my family is not very bad, at least we belong in between the middle and the upper class. My father was a lawyer and before my mother died we had various forestry concessions, like selling lumber and things like that. We had those general stores downtown where we sell groceries and haberdashery and nick-nacks.

"I was born September 1908 in Laoag, Ilocos Norte. Laoag is large for a province town. It has a population of about 20,000. It is the capital of our province and has alot of businesses. Most stores, the big ones are owned by the Chinese and the Japanese. Only about three stores are owned by Filipinos, ours is one of them.

"I am the third son in our family. Our family has five sons and two daughters. My two older brothers came to this country too. As a matter of fact that's one reason why I came here, to find them, because when my mother died we never heard from my oldest brother again.

"My father was really active in community affairs during my school days especially when I was in high school.

"In those days the city was divided into political quadrants with service organizations in each of the four sections. We have organizations in those different parts of the city and these organizations put up some sort of challenge just to see that all the sections are improved culturally, athletically and politically.

"Religion played a central role in the life of most families. While most townspeople are Catholic, we have an independent church that was organized by another Filipino priest and then we have the Protestant and it was organized and run by Americans. The Catholic church sponsored clubs ... ladies and men's clubs so that it's like what goes on in this country, you know. Youth clubs, too ... and the Catholic Boy Scouts ... and Catholic Campfire

* Personal Interview with Leo Lorenzo July 15, 1978.

Girls ... I was a boy scout and then a scout master.

"The educational system was like in the U.S. Americans from the Bureau of Education were sent to the Philippines to teach classes divided into sections ("tracked"). For instance, the freshman class would have from 17 to 20 sections. The sections were rated from A through Z and assignments to sections were based on placement through examination. If you have an A average in your entrance exam, you belong to section A, and section B was mostly girls even if they have good academic entrance exams. I don't know if that's sex discrimination or something, because all Class A students are boys and Class B, section 2 are girls, and then after that sections are mixed.

"As capital of the province and largest city, Laoag was the provincial center of education through high school. The surrounding town did not have any high school, so that the students came there to have a high school education. It was really a very nice situation because all the students of different mores and characteristics mingled together. And as a matter of fact we have two or three lots where we built houses for school kids or students from different towns for boarding. Of course, they furnished their own groceries, maids and cooks to work for them in the meantime, as they are going to school.

"Like in U.S. schools military training was offered as a way of teaching discipline and respect for authority. In addition, sports, basketball, baseball, and track were also offered.

"Most youth of my day want a higher education to get some training. They wanted to become doctors, lawyers, and professionals. In our thinking we have a high regard for America. We thought this country is throwing gold in the streets, that was the impression that we have of this country. Besides, government students who were sent to

different universities in the U.S., received high positions when they came back. Of course, they were pension students (pensionados^{*}) who didn't have to work to pursue their education. They didn't go anything but go to school.

"The colleges in the islands at that time were not as popular or the faculty was not as good as it is suppose to be and then besides, as I said, most of the young generation are coming to this country and they are afraid that they will be left out. However, I didn't regret that I came to this country, the thing that really made me feel sorry is that if I stayed there (Philippines), I could have finished the career that I wanted. I went only as far as the junior year in high school before leaving for the U.s.

"Education was very special to my family. You see my dad organized some kind of group and I can't remember the name, but it was in Ilocano, but the sense was to help those students graduating in high school who don't have any money or cannot afford to go to college, just like a scholarship. My dad, he offered money, he sent alot of those students to finish college. A lot of them finished their college degrees. Some became engineers, lawyers, teachers and that's what he did."

(Leo planned on becoming a doctor, but was never able to complete his undergraduate course of study.)

"We (Filipino youth) didn't have the ambition of going out of the Philippines until the late 1920's when (Filipinos) started coming here in the U.S., even though when I was a little kid, they started to take Filipinos in Hawaii (as agriculture laborers). That was way, way

* An educational program where Filipino students were chosen for "state-side" training at major universities and colleges.

back, 1919, I don't know maybe later. The only people that go to Hawaii (before the 1920's) were the illiterate, the very, very poor people. The first immigrants that went to Hawaii were mostly illiterate and the younger generation (his generation) did not have that ambition to get away, yet. They wanted to study, that's the ambition of the young generation of my time. Yes, my generation (wanted education), but this older generation, especially the poor people and illiterate people, when they found out that they have the opportunity to go and work somewhere besides the Philippines, they they went to Hawaii."

PHILIP VERA CRUZ:^{*} "I was born in the barrio where you don't see very many educated people. I didn't have any educated person in my family. I was only trying to figure things out by myself. My people (parents) could not give me any advice except, 'try to be good!' Now what that meant I don't really know. It was very, very difficult, I could not depend on them because they did not have the education to guide me, you know? But sometimes I see these candidates like Quirino at that time was a candidate for the House of Representatives. Politics was a lively thing, people take it very serious. You see even my relatives got big canes, knives and all that shit. Whenever something goes wrong everybody will be killing each other.

"But these were the idol of the young people. You look at people. Like religion was an important part of the town. Cause I use to go to church also and listen to sermons, you know. They really can swing the young people. They tell you that the minister is the most important citizen right there in the community. The young people then are kind of in the stage of being emotional. So they could sway from one side to the other,

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, June 3, 1978.

like that, so naturally they get inspired. Sometimes when you are in the barrio, you see doctors, lawyers, and your teacher. They become your model, see? So those were the inspirations of the young people then.

"I was born December 25, 1904 in the province of Ilocos Sur. I started going to school there in La Paz, that was the name of the town in Ilocos Sur. And then when I was in the fifth grade we moved to Pangasinan and there I graduated from the elementary school and (then) I went to Cagayan High School for a year. Then I transferred to Vigan a normal school in Ilocos Sur. See Vigan is in Pangasinan and Vigan is the capital of Ilocos Sur. Then from there I was in the junior class in the normal school in Vigan.

"I was the oldest. I got one sister and one brother, both were very small when I left. The others died when they were small, when they were babies. My father was kind of sickly and as far as I could remember he was sick then. He had inherited some land from his mother, but he could not work so some other people had been working on the land. That was the way we live. We are not the rich peasants, you see you have the rich ones and you have the poor ones. We are not, we just got a little bit more than most of the people around us, except the rich ones. That's the situation we were in. Then as I was going to school, I have to spend some money, so I was selling the property. See, that's the way I got a little education in the Philippines, because I used the property.

"I cannot stay in the barrio because there is no school there. Maybe first grade, but I went farther than the first grade, so therefore I got to leave the barrio, I got to be in towns, small cities. So I grew up in both places.

"I was born in the barrio, but most of my life in the Philippines was in the towns, because I was going to school.

"So because of that situation that I had, I think that my mind was maturing fast because I was very young, but I was kind of serious and I knew that I didn't have the means. Cause I knew what we got, and my father and mother could not give me anymore. I spent the last of the money that we got over there to come here (to the U.S.).

"Many young Filipinos came to the U.S. with only vague ideas about getting a higher education. The young generation at that time had a very low estimation of persons who worked on the soil ... that was the reaction of students even when they are in intermediate and then much more when they are in high school. They don't want to work in the farm. But then you got to understand also the overreaction of the young generation at that time to manual labor. Because you see the Spaniards never allowed the masses of people, the working people, to have an education and it was very degrading. (But) when the Americans came they introduced the public school. And that's why the Filipino thought the Americans were so good. The Filipinos were so attracted to the American ideas because of those principles, i.e. freedom, democracy, and liberty. Naturally, they expected to be treated the way they were taught. The only thing, though, was that they found out some kind of contradiction when they (Filipinos) were fighting for some kind of independence and then the Americans don't want it to be. You see, because they (American teachers) were teaching freedom -- naturally when you learn that, you want it for yourself. But they don't want to give it.

"Filipinos were moving by then. It was very hard breaking that family unity, but there were factors that

sent them all over the world because our country was shocked by imperialism."

SUMMATION

What is verified in this section of the study is the petty bourgeois character of a sector of the first wave of Filipino immigrants. The background information presented through the interviews reveals that motivation for coming to the U.S. was somewhat more complex than what is more commonly thought. While the first wave of Filipino immigrants was predominantly peasant and worker background, our interviewees would lead us to believe that a large number of immigrants were of the petty bourgeois sectors of Philippine society, whose primary interest in coming to the U.S. was to gain a higher education and professional training. Their stay in the U.S. was perceived to be only a transitory status, a means to their more strategic goals for professional careers.

This grouping of sons of land owning merchants or professionals and "rich" peasants are often overlooked when considering the make-up of Filipino immigration and should be studied more closely.

CHAPTER II

A PROCESS OF PROLETARIANIZATION

What this chapter of the paper attempts to draw out is the process of proletarianization and its relationship to the broader historical context. Once in the U.S. the conditions faced by Filipino immigrants was qualitatively different from what they had been led to expect. Expectations and reality did not match up. As each day, month, year slipped by the myth of America as a "land of opportunity" was becoming drastically altered. The contradiction between their aspirations and objective reality became increasingly difficult for most Filipino immigrants to reconcile as they attempted to push through with their plans for advanced degrees and professional training in the midst of a worsening economic crisis and a social structure closed to them by institutionalized racism and rampant discrimination.

It is unclear how many of the thousands who immigrated specifically to take advantage of the educational "opportunities" were successful, but it is clear that they were the rare exception. What occurred in the cases represented here, as it must have occurred thousands of times over, was a process of proletarianization, that is, an objective transformation from a petty bourgeois lifestyle established in the Philippines, with aspirations for prestigious professions, to the ranks of the working class.

In a capitalist economy such as that of the United States the producers of the wealth are what constitute the working class; that is, that class which possessing nothing but their labor power, sells that power to capital in return for its subsistence. As such, the working class is

first of all raw material for exploitation and as long as the relationship is maintained -- where workers are separated from the ownership of the means of production, where they have no control over what they produce or the methods of production -- then we can expect polarization between labor and capital.

These experiences cannot be properly appreciated without providing the historical circumstances to which they are linked. To accomplish this, a general overview of the development of agricultural capitalist industrialism in California will be provided in the first section of this chapter since its development was almost singly responsible for the influx of Filipinos to the U.S. in the 1920's. Following this will be a brief overview of Filipino American history and the particular recollection of our interviewees as members of the first wave of Filipino immigrants. At the same time, this provides us with a sense of the proletarianizing aspects of their experience.

In a later section of this chapter a brief history of farm labor organizing, especially as it relates to the Great Depression, will be inserted to provide the backdrop for the sometimes spontaneous, sometimes organized labor disputes that dominated this period of heightened working class consciousness. The interweaving of the experiences of the subjects of this study with the historical phenomenon of the period should provide us with a more concrete sense of Filipino participation in the labor movement of that time.

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

The need for Filipino labor in the U.S. was greatly intensified by

the expansion of California agriculture which had developed into agri-industrial empires by the turn of the century. By this time capitalist development of agriculture in California was near consolidation. Through a process of land monopolization and the exploitation of cheap immigrant labor, the barren lands of California were built into industrial empires by the early 1900's.

Monopolization of the land had begun in the early 1800's. By 1871 the lands of California were already owned by a few individuals. Five hundred and sixteen men owned 8,658,439 acres of land.¹² Land had been accumulated as the private property of a few mainly in the decade 1850 through 1860. Hugh tracts were acquired in basically four ways: through Mexican land grants that were never broken up and redivided, through railroad grants*, through Federal government grants and swamp land purchases from the State for virtually nothing. The ownership patterns established by force or fraud in the decade from 1860 to 1870 have pretty much determined the economic structure of the state. This concentration of ownership made large scale operations and intense exploitation of the land feasible.

Concentration of ownership was only one factor in the development of agribusiness. The other factor of equal significance was the exploitative manipulation of large numbers of migratory racial minority groups that were imported to implement the intensive cultivation of California's fields. California agricultoreal labor was a succession of immigrant groups -- Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Mexican and Filipino. The story of

* In 1860 approximately 16% of the entire area of land owned by the government of California had been given to the railroads ¹³: In 1919 the Southern Pacific was still the chief landowner in the State.

the development of California agriculture is essentially the same as the story of nearly eighty years of labor exploitation and racism in California agriculture.

With concentration of land ownership and a source of cheap labor fairly well established, the course of agribusiness fluctuated only with revolutionary changes in land use and changes in the availability of labor. As these factors became more stable, agriculture developed into a specialized industry in California not by a process of gradual transition, but by a series of major changes in operation.

What the agricultural capitalist looked for was a way to utilize an immense amount of land for a crop that would require only a minimum of expense, promised a quick return and (because of the scarcity and expense of labor) utilized a minimum of labor. The first crop to fit this criteria was the cultivation of wheat. Many factors contributed to the rapid expansion of wheat farming: the inflated prices which followed the discovery of gold, a rapidly growing population within the state, a remarkably favorable climate, and the fact that California wheat could stand long shipment by boat to England. The reign of wheat lasted approximately twenty years.

But then in the period between 1870 and 1878, a marked change took place in California agriculture as a result of a recession that affected the profitability of wheat. Fluctuations in world prices, drought, competition from the new grain areas of Russia and the Mississippi Valley, and high freight rates were all factors in the economic decline that forced land barons to the realization that the great bonanza years of wheat were over.

But California wheat barons were given another chance with advances

made in the fruit growing industry. At the forefront of these advancements was the introduction of irrigation. This permitted the cultivation of lands formerly inaccessible. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 was another historical development which facilitated the transportation of this highly perishable commodity. Also a part of these improving conditions were the developments made in horticulture and vitaculture in California. Luther Burbank developed types of fruit that would stand up under long transportation hauls. But the most vital factor in making the transition from wheat farming to the farming of deciduous and citrous fruit was the presence of Chinese in California after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. The presence of cheap labor. Had this not been the historical circumstance, the development of fruit as an industry might have altered considerably.

The growers not only needed a large supply of labor at a time when labor was scarce, but at a time when wages were high, they demanded the cheapest possible type of labor in order to compete with their associates who engaged in large-scale wheat production through the use of mechanized methods.¹⁴ The Chinese as a source of cheap labor were made to offer. When the growers turned to the Chinese, the Chinese were already at a great disadvantage because of discriminatory legislation that had been directed at them as early as 1850. By 1870 they had been driven from the mines. And with the completion of the transcontinental railroad thousands of Chinese were thrown into unemployment, making them easy prey for growers who were beginning to demand a large supply of cheap labor. At this same time the desperate situation of the Chinese rendered them good candidates for the migratory lifestyle desired by the grower. In addition, they brought to the job a skill in packing fruit and in many instances actually

taught their overlords how to plant, cultivate and harvest orchard and garden crops.

In 1886 the first full train of deciduous fruit was shipped from California and the victory of fruit over wheat was firmly established.¹⁵

But by 1893 the fruit industry was seriously undermined and ruin faced the growers. While the grower was congratulating himself on the good fortune of finding the Chinese, other sectors were building an anti-Chinese campaign that would result in the exclusion of Chinese to the U.S. and rob the grower of his labor supply.

This movement was directly related to the maturation of another capitalist crisis which again threw the American economy into depression by 1893. This depression was acutely felt in California. By June 1893, twenty-seven banks had failed in California alone.¹⁶ Industry was at a standstill. In the wake of an economic crisis and anti-Chinese movement growers concluded that they could no longer fight back. A coalition of small farmers (who could not compete against the large orchardist and organized labor) and small manufacturers, who had fanned the flames of the anti-coolie drive into a state-wide movement, were too strong a force to overcome.

With the loss of "an adequate labor supply" and the deteriorating economic situation the fruit industry was doomed. But once again capitalist ingenuity brought to the fore a new intensive crop, capable of producing quick profits which would supplement existing crop productions. This crop was sugar beets. Legislative maneuverings by Sugar Trusts brought the passage of the Dingley Tariff Act of 1897 which imposed a heavy duty on imported sugar. This paved the way for the rapid expansion of sugar

beet factories to take advantage of the open market. Great beet plantations were started by sugar trusts forcing small growers out of business and into the hands of the trusts.

Once again cheap labor was needed to make this crop most profitable. With Chinese excluded from U.S. shores, Japanese were brought in to fill the void. By 1909 the Labor Commission reported that 6,000 Japanese were working in the sugar beet fields, 30,000 in labor overall.¹⁷ But the same forces that promoted the anti-Chinese movement then victimized the Japanese for successfully farming the land they owned, and their effective labor organizing. By 1924 they were also excluded.

OVERVIEW OF FILIPINO IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.

This labor vacuum prompted further active recruitment of foreign labor to drive down the wages being demanded by whites who had been driven out of the mid-west to the fields of California by a worsening economic situation. Filipinos were the next group to be imported for their labor. This need for cheap labor -- young, male and mobile -- acted as a magnetic force pulling Filipino labor from the employment vacuum created by U.S. colonialism in the Philippines to Hawaii and the U.S., California and the West Coast in particular.

In 1923, there were no restrictions on Filipinos as they were nationals and consequently entitled to enter continental United States as a matter of right. From 1923 to 1930 the number of Filipino immigrants constantly increased. According to the U.S. Census Filipinos numbered 5,603 by 1920,¹⁸ 45,208 by 1930,¹⁹ (5,795 entering in 1929 alone²⁰), and 45,563 by 1940.²¹ The Filipino population of California and the United States changed in the

decade 1920-1930 as follows:²²

	<u>1920</u>	<u>1930</u>
California	2,674	30,470
United States	5,603	45,208
Percentage of total in California	47.7%	67.2%

Unlike most other groups that immigrated to the U.S., Filipinos immigrated after monopoly capitalism was already well entrenched in the U.S. Filipinos arrived into a country which had already established a strong tradition of racism against Blacks, and other non-white groups. Anti-Asian agitation had been particularly rampant prior to Filipino arrival especially in California. By 1924 all other Asian groups had already been barred by exclusion laws. Alien land laws barred Asians from buying and owning land. As distinct from the other immigrant groups, Asians were not allowed to participate in the political arena because of their confused status in the U.S. They were neither foreigners nor citizens. They had no voting rights, nor were their interests represented by any political body.

When Asian exclusion cut off immigration from China and Japan, where agriculture had previously drawn labor, the U.S. looked to the Philippines as another source of cheap labor. After World War I, Filipinos and Mexicans began to trickle into the valleys looking for employment. By 1923 and up until 1929, Filipino laborers were arriving in California at the rate of 4,177 a year.²³ Because the Philippines was a "protectorate" of the U.S. (a colony, in other words) Filipinos were not classed as aliens and were allowed to move freely between the two countries until the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1935 which promised complete independence by 1946 and restricted the quota of Filipino immigrants at 50 per year beginning

in 1935. Those immigrants who arrived before 1935 constituted the first of three waves of Filipino immigrants.

Filipinos who came prior to 1934 were predominantly male, young and single, living mainly on the West Coast, working in agriculture as laborers, and in the urban areas as houseboys, busboys, and pantrymen. The ratio of males to females in the State of California before 1930 was about 14 to 1. During the 10 year period, 1929-1929, for every 1,395 Filipino males arriving there were comparatively 100 Filipino females.²⁴ The U.S. Census placed the sex ratio at 15 to 1 nationwide.²⁵ The stark imbalance in the ratio can be traced to the need for the growing agricultural industry on the West Coast for predominantly young, single men who could be in a position to be mobile. In California alone, the Filipino population in 1930 was 31,092 with 93 out of every 100 Filipinos being males and 7 of 100 females.²⁶

The majority of immigrants came from the provinces rather than the urban areas such as Manila. Although a sizable number immigrated from provincial urban centers. (Which is the case of the subjects of this study.) Of particular significance were the provinces of Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, and Abra on the northern island of Luzon. Most immigrants had little or no education, but many did have a high school education and came specifically to advance their economic status through professional training. But whether they had many years of education or a few, the only type of employment they found upon arriving in the U.S. were low paying, low status jobs, those being principally in farm labor and domestic work.²⁷ For the most part they were used on the large ranches, particularly in asparagus cutting. When they were first recruited they were

immigrants today approaches 30,000 a year and will soon constitute the largest sector of the Filipino community. As the second largest immigrating group to the U.S. today, Filipino history as an immigrant group is still in the making.)

EARLY EXPERIENCES IN THE U.S.: AL, LEO AND PHILIP

Arriving Filipinos of the first wave of immigration were generally from the barrios of the rural Philippines. But there were considerable numbers of immigrants from the small cities and provincial centers as well, whose lifestyle and frame of reference differ somewhat from the barrio immigrant. The perspective of the immigrant of urban background, represented here, is somewhat different from what we have previously read about Filipinos in that it is reflective more of the city Filipino whose outlook is a manifestation of a stronger petty bourgeois influence as opposed to the narrower world view of the peasant. The initial naivete is still apparant, but the confidence in their own objectives was enough to sustain their initial subjective certainty that things might still work out. This was tested time and again by the contradictions that surround them in employment, education, etc., and finally took the form, where the skills they might have utilized in building their own professional careers was transferred to the arena of the labor movement as organizers.

The response of these three Filipinos to the overt racism, the sharp contradiction between aspiration and reality was not to be passive, but to fight back at that identifiable symbol of his oppression, the grower or cannery boss. This was a progressive and bold response to make, especially given their tenuous status as aliens. Initial hesitations fell by

the wayside as it became increasingly apparent that the oppression of other workers was the same as the oppression they themselves experienced as farm laborers, hotel pantry men, cannery workers, etc.

Their disappointment at having failed to achieve their goals was not characterized by apathy or withdrawal, but impelled them to actively struggle to ameliorate those injustices. The militance expressed in their stand to confront these conditions was a reflection of their transformed self image inspired not only by the general climate of social activism of the depression period, but, it would appear, that their moralistic sense of injustice as shaped or influenced by their petty bourgeois backgrounds, also played a role in drawing them into the struggle to improve conditions for the worker. The confidence in their own ability to lead, coupled with the practical skills they were exposed to through the educational process, were products of their petty bourgeois backgrounds and a resource utilized in the service of the workers instead of personal advancement.

AL MASIGAT *

"Well there are two different groups that come in here (the U.S.). Some of them came to work for money and some came here to further their own education ... The people that had to work really hard in the Philippines were not in a position to come to this country, because they don't have the money. And the only place they can go was in Hawaii and that's where they went. So that the people that came directly here were people that wanted to have adventure and further their own education. ...That was my expectation. But everything changed when I got here and instead of we go back and work in there (the Philippines) we stayed here

* Personal Interview with Al Masigat, July 17, 1978.

I might be wrong, but in the boat that I rode, we were about 400 Filipinos ... and I was trying to find out why all these Filipinos are coming and we all have the same idea, like adventure and our own education ... I didn't even think about having to work. See how greenhorn our ideas were before? We just came in with a few dollars in our pocket, we don't know nothing here in the U.S., no relatives, no nothing, yet what we thought when we came here was just to go to school. When you did not go to a college or university before, you think this is just like high school, just buy your books, that's all. No tuition or anything like that ... That's why we came to this country. The majority, two-thirds of the Filipinos did not have the experience of work."

Al arrived in Seattle, July 27, 1927. He was 21 years old and had never worked before coming here. But one here, he was faced with finding a job. Even though he landed with a emergency fund of \$700 given to him by an aunt, he found he would need much more than that to live and finance his schooling.

"My first job was mowing lawn for families ... I did that for about a week. I was working for a gardener, a Japanese. Oh, I was very happy because my pay for those days was one dollar an hour and to me one dollar an hour was big money. Sometimes we worked 10 to 12 hours and so at the end of the day when we finished our job, maybe 10 hours I get ten dollars ... after my first day I said to myself, where will I put all this money? But that lasted only a short time. Pretty soon I'm back again looking for a job.

My first farm work was in strawberries ... and they made us stay in the stables where they keep the mules, horses, and things like that. See, we just put our straw in there, put our blankets in there and stay with the horses and mules. When they told us to work in the morning I said to the owner

'no, we are not going to work'. That was my first encounter. I don't know why ... I did not work in the Philippines, but that was my first reaction to people like that, 'no' I said to the boss, 'no, we are not going to work today unless you promise that we are going to have some room in part of your house to sleep, not in the barn ... because in the Philippines, we do not do that, even how poor you are!' You do not sleep with the horses especially when the weather here is too cool. 'Alright, you go home, you're all fired!' After that I went to Alaska. That was still my first year here. That's how I was induced to go to Alaska because they told me that when you go there and have a nice season, then when you come back you will have \$500 or \$600. And when a boy who had no experience in having a job like that, heard about \$500, boy that's big money! I never tried to work in the Philippines even one time, so that when I heard that I said 'why not go in there?' "

After his Alaska experience Al could only find small agricultural jobs like apple picking in Yakima Valley. Recognizing how difficult it would be to go to school and work, Al and a friend decided that they would go back to the Philippines. The money given to him by his aunt was specifically for this purpose. On their way to purchase their tickets they ran into a townmate of theirs who talked Al into staying, "... co-wards, you just came in and you already want to go back!" He offered Al his first steady job -- washing dishes. So he decided to stay. But that didn't last long either. Al drifted from job to job in the Seattle area taking mainly agricultural jobs during the warm months and what he could find during the cold months. Around October he would quit working because of the cold.

"We come to town that's all. You could try to go and

get a culinary job in the city, but the question is, it is very hard to find a job like that because you need a recommendation. Where can I get a recommendation if I never tried work like that? ... One year, when I got tired of working the fields, I tried to find a job as a houseboy and in my first encounter as a houseboy I worked only one night and one day and then they fired me because when they asked me if I knew how to cook, I told them yeah. I know how to cook, but if they asked me a direct question as 'do you know how to cook an American food?' then I would not tell a lie, see. I would say 'no, sir,' or 'no, ma'am.' But when they asked me a question like, 'Do you know how to cook?' Then, I said yes. So that on the first night, the woman of the family cooked our dinner, but the next morning when they asked me to cook their breakfast, oh boy, that was it now. And I did not even know how to operate their stove. So where is the fire, where is the wood? I could not find the wood in there, so I put wood in stove and smoke came all out of the house, yes they have a gas stove, but how do you know if you never saw one like that in your life? So, they fired me."

Al tried to hang on to his \$700 during these years while trying to earn enough to go to school. But this became increasingly difficult as the country approached the Great Depression.

"Well, you see, when I came in this country I was lucky to have some money on myself, just in case I don't like this country then I can go back right away. But on the first year of the depression, then little by little, I spent that money because my group was composed of six men and whenever we don't have nothing then I go somewhere else and take some of the money that I have and spend for

all of us, so that on December of the first year of the depression, I only got \$100 left and that was too low! I even sweat cold sweat, see I remeber that very clearly because that night it was so warm and I was sweating cold sweat because I got nervous, you know...."

"By that time I think I decide that I would like to learn something like conservation in school so I could help with conserving of fish in the Philippines. I tried to enter into the University of Washington but they rejected my application on account of I did not have enough subjects and I cannot really speak English. That's their contention on me when I applied at the University and they advised me to go back to one of the high schools over here. So I went to a high school and you know what? In that room, there were 60 of us in that room and I was wondering, on my first day, because when they ask question of all these whites, Japanese and Chinese in there, they really cannot speak English! Even the white people because these white people have been immigrants from Europe. So I said to myself, my goodness, what kind of high school is this! So on that day we had a test and, 'my name is, my teacher's name is ..., good morning, sir ...' those were the questions they were asking! And when the teacher wrote the questions then I answer and I went there to give my answer. And he said, 'how did you do it?' I just finish writing the question.' And I said, well, I finish my answers, then she looked at me and said, 'What ... you're correct.' Well, I don't know ma'am but these are very simple questions. So I stayed there for two weeks and then my teacher advised me 'well, I don't know why you are in here, you are just spending your time here foolishly, because you are better than me! Why did they send you here?' And then she advised me to go to a small college over here and so, what you call that?, on the second semester, I enrolled myself in one of

the small colleges. But after one attempt, a semester at San Martin College in Olympia, the depression began and that's it, I cannot continue no more ... Well, I felt sorry for myself, but what can I do, that's the fate I had. I was awfully sorry, I told my father in a letter 'father you wanted me to be somebody and I don't think that I can do that because right now I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't even have a room ... so maybe I will not write to you again for a long, long time because I don't need to write you telling you all my headaches.' That's what I told to my father ... That was on, I think, the second year of the depression. That was the time when I really gave up everything on my goal. That's why I wrote my father ...

"... I don't have no money left so I went to Alaska that year. But you know how much we get when we went to Alaska? When I came home, I only have \$50 for four months! And then the Filipino contractor, he told me to buy a suit, and that suit cost me \$10, so I got only \$40 left, so what can I do with this? So I looked and looked for a job and I could not find no job. I've been looking for any kind of job, but I can't find no job no more, no dishwasher, no janitor, no anything like that. So how can I go to school now? I don't have any money.....

"So those were the things that really got me and then instead of getting away from gambling places, then I started to patronize them, patronize them until it came into my blood that maybe someday I will hit this one and go back.

"When the depression was on I decide to go to California because all the old timers that went in there already told us that we had a better chance to find jobs in California than in Washington, because in those early years weather is very bad on November, December, January, February, March and April. During the depression, you hardly find a

here in Seattle. We thought that when we go to California we could find a better job in there. That was, I think, in November in 1931. That was a real experience for me because when we were in there we didn't have money for transportation and we took the railroad, ... boxcar ... it took us about a week to reach there because one time we didn't know what to do until we found out that we were already in another state. Somewhere in Texas ... so that when we found out from other people in the boxcars that we were already in Texas, then we went with them because they had experience ... because they want to go to California. They were white people. They took us to a boxcar that will surely go to California.

"The first job that I found in California was in the field, working as cutter in a lettuce field in Delano. When I was in there, I found so many friends and they told me that if we follow the crops, then we had a better chance. What I mean by following the crops is this. They have a different season in planting different vegetables. Like lettuce ... the lettuce is growing year round, you know. I think three or four times in a year. That's why it's not hard to find. There are also places in California where you could find the lettuce industry. It's only a simple farming, and it took us only three days to work on that. So they told me that if you go to Salinas, that would be a better place to work in because they had big, big fields for that kind of product. Not only the lettuce now. Any product, like they had different ... from November to December to February, they also had this fruit industry, like picking lemons, oranges, ... so we went to those places where you can find all those products.

"We were in a group. Because Filipinos then were really united. We do not go by ourselves, but it is better for a group to go together. Sometimes five, sometimes six, sometimes twelve. That's what we do them. We are really lucky

because everywhere that we went in California, we were always welcome to work. And instead of taking any different kind of races, like white, the Mexican or the Indians, they preferred the Filipinos. No trouble looking for a job there.

" ... when we work with the big growers, these growers have a contractor. Sometimes American contractors and sometimes Filipino contractors. In all my experiences, there were mean contractors and there also were good contractors. When you hit the mean contractor then that's just too bad for you. But a mean contractor is like this: the owner of that particular place where you work, they tell the contractor to supply them with men with the condition that they are going to pay these men a certain amount of money. But some contractor, supposing it's like the owner, the owner of the land says, '... all right, supply me with 25 men and I will pay them fifty cents a hour.' Instead of paying you fifty cents an hour, the contractor might say to you, '... Well, I'm going to charge you thirty cents an hour'... so he gets the rest of the money. And sometimes when we had a contract job, on the fruit industry like picking apples, we don't do that by the hour, but by the contract. Suppose the owner of the land says, 'Well, I'll give your men five cents a box.' Then the contractor would say, 'I'll get two cents and a half.' Even though he is already given the commission and wages! This contractor ... is also getting a percentage of your wages. And those were some of the things we encountered before and sometimes I am fired out, because I go direct to the owner and ask him how much they are giving us. The owner of the land says, 'I'm giving you five cents a box.' And then when I told him ' ... the contractor is giving me only two cents and a half.' Then, if the contractor is found cheating, it's either the contractor or me is fired out.'

This pattern of migration between Washington and California was one that Al followed for thirty years.

"... I go to California in autumn. In the summer I come back to Seattle because I have to go to Alaska. And then after coming back from Alaska, I stay in Seattle for about a month and then went back to California. That was how I travelled before.

"As for the conditions, well some were bad, and some were good. It all depends upon the condition of the farmer that owns the land. If it's just a surviving farmer then you do not expect a good accomodation. But if you are living in a big farm, where the owner of the land is rich, then the place is better. But anyway, on those years, because it was during the depression, you do not need to have a complaint. As long as you have place to hide when the winter comes or rain comes, then that's very good for you. Because you can see people, people wondering where and when they are going to eat. Where they can get a small room for them to hide. That's why we Filipinos were not so particular in those years, because we know that it's depression, we never know of heard of depression before, but when you see the condition that even the owner of the farm is trying to survive himself in order that he's going to pay you a little bit, then that's it, you do not have to complain.

"... We survived by helping each other. Supposing you don't have no shoes to wear, what can you do? You cannot work in the fields if you don't have shoes, that's the time when we come in see? We contribute to each other and buy him shoes."

LEO LORENZO *

Leo arrived in Seattle July 10, 1927. "Yes, I came directly to Seattle because I had two brothers that were ahead of me. I didn't know their addresses so I just took a chance..." His objective was to get professional training.

"The graduates that came back (to the Philippines) never mentioned work ... They had to work, but they never talked about it. They never talked about working in Yakima, in the fields of Salinas, Stockton or any of those places. They never mentioned Alaska! As soon as they finish their studies and get their college degrees, they came back to the islands and got a good position and we had the impression that it was that easy to get a college degree."

Soon after Leo's arrival he had to take a job picking raspberries. While he felt he could easily handle a desk job, he was never able to secure one.

" ... I was my father's secretary and manager in business before I came over, so I thought I would be able to get a secretarial job, or office job. So I heard all around that its hard to get that. So to make it easier for me so I could get a job like that, I enrolled in the school of business of the YMCA, to prepare myself. I took business courses like business English and typing and bookkeeping and things like that. I thought that I would be able to work in an office and after I got through, believe me, they won't even look at you. The only jobs available were agricultural or domestic. I remained in the Seattle area until 1929, then after Alaska I went to California, in Salinas, for a while to join some of the group working in the farms because that was the only work that most of the Filipinos can do during those years, and when there were not enough jobs for everybody in Salinas, they the moved to Los Angeles. Besides, I wanted to go to school so I didn't

* Personal Interview with Leo Lorenzo, July 17, 1978.

stay there very long. I worked in hotels and restaurants and (for) families. You know, some of the prominent families in Hollywood like some of the actresses, some big businessmen."

For a few years in the early 1930's, Leo migrated to California from Seattle to take agricultural jobs.

"My brother said there are better chances in the farm to make money than working in hotels and restaurants. So I went over to see how it worked and it was really alright. However, the life conditions in California during that time was unbearable because the living conditions and the wages, well, the wages were low all over anyway, but to exist and to live you have to get any kind of job being offered to you. I worked in lettuce, asparagus, beets and practically everything, tomatoes and grapes too. Of course, these kinds of items were seasonal and we worked tomatoes when it was time for tomatoes, etc...."

These crops brought him to such towns as Salinas and Stockton in California with other Filipino migrants. He did this for two years until about 1932, making sure that he was back in Seattle each fall "...to see if I can go back to school."

As soon as he could manage, Leo began going to school part-time in order to begin to carry out his original intentions here. He had decided to become a doctor and was anxious to begin his studies. While in California in 1929, he began as a part time student at University of California at Los Angeles but "didn't finish the semester, so I came back to Seattle and registered at the University of Washington in 1930. He worked as a domestic at a hotel while he attempted to continue work on his degree. From 1929-32 he went to California during the summers, after 1932 he went

to Alaska during the summers to work in the salmon canneries.

Many Filipinos were attempting to do this, " .. practically all the Filipinos that came here, their ambition is to go to school, but to our disappointment our expectations were not realized."

He was able only to maintain this plan for a few more years. By 1934 he had quit going to school. "... I didn't have very much money to be able to go to the college of medicine so I transferred to the collage of science in physical education and that was it." While the conditions were obviously unfavorable Leo hung on to his ambitions tenaciously for a few years. He maintained an optimism that instilled in him the attitude that, "... no matter how long it would take I would continue to try ... but then as time goes by, economic conditions change, especially when we were being discriminated and then that's mostly the main reason why (we could not succeed), we were being discriminated, we were not able to pursue the things that we would like to have, just as an American or a foreigner of the white race would have." His hopes of completing his education in the U.S. gave way to the possibility of completing his degree in the Philippines after a visit there in 1940.

" ... before the second World War, I went back to the Islands in 1940 and when I was there I saw a lot of opportunities to finish my doctor's degree ... all those boys, students that I went to school with, had become doctors and lawyers and other kinds of professionals. So I made all the arrangements (so that) when I go back, I would go to the college of medicine. So I came here (back to the U.S.) to arrange my papers in order to go back the same year, but the war broke out, so that ended my plans and ambitions."

With the war interrupting his plans to return to the Philippines to

pick up his education, Leo gave up all hopes of professional training. The realization that he really had no more options left was source of shame:

" ... most of us came to this country for education ... and after a few years we found out that most of the students that we went to school with were all professionals. They all graduated from the college in the islands, and through pride we didn't want to go back because we know that we would be the laughing stock or we will be ostracized by society. That's the reason why we took the notion that as long as we can exist, we might as well stay in the U.S."

After quitting school in 1934 Leo continued to work in hotels in Seattle,

" ... you see that was the only jobs available at that time. Those were the kitchen jobs, and I worked in one of the big hotels at the University of Washington. I worked there for 18 years. I went to Alaska during the summer and then I would go back to my same job."

PHILIP VERA CRUZ *

(NOTE: While Philip was not primarily a farm worker during his early experiences, it is worthwhile noting his experiences as an urban worker since this is the context of his proletarianization.)

" ... I came to the United States and spent the last part of the real estate value, the money, coming here , and it was not even enough. I borrowed some money, like 60 pesos, I even forgot now, from my relatives. So I came in to the United States because my main objective was to continue my studies. The reason why I was motivated to go to school was because we use to have American teachers and they told us that there were many poor students in the United

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, June 17, 1978.

States who were working their way through. So I was willing to work for my education. I thought that I could come and do the same thing. That was the reason.

"We left the Philippines, I think it was April 25, 1926, and we arrived in Seattle, Washington on May 16, or something, I'm not sure about the date, but it was May. I was on a Canadian steamship line and it went to Vancouver, British Columbia. Seattle was my destination.

"There were four in our group from Pangasinan but all together we were three hundred and there were only two women. The two were very much older than me, I think they were teaching then, I don't know, but they looked educated to me. They begin to talk because it was pretty close to arriving because we were in the Pacific. I heard they were going to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Detroit. So I said to myself, where the hell am I going? I didn't know. I was going to the United States was all I know. I was pretty good in geography, you know, but then I was not very specific. The others in my group don't know where they are going either. Then I look at my papers and passport and I found out that I was landing in Vancouver, and I was going to Seattle, via Vancouver. And then when we got in there, we don't know what was going to happen. I only got \$25 left. And the others were swindled there in Manila so I don't know how much money they got left.

"I begin to look and listen what these people were talking and doing. They were busy calling hotels and other things. I didn't even know how to use the telephone. I kind of snoop around and then I kind of heard a guy. 'Is there any room over there?' and they said no more. So now what hotel? And somebody said Diamond Hotel. So I think someone called up and I talked also, and there was a vacancy so we took a taxi. We are not

used to taking taxis either, because we do not have any taxis in the barrio. When you want to go somewhere you walk. But we went, we took a taxi, it was already dark and when we got in there he said well, here it is. We unloaded our suitcases on the sidewalk and we go around and we don't see no hotel.

"One guy said, 'Why don't you go up, go out there?' Then I went up farther and I heard some people talking. I looked and I said yes, that the hotel. Then we went back down the stairs and carried our rotten suitcases, and then the girl, the Japanese girl, was busy talking to the guy who also kind of wanted a room to himself. I was listening and standing there, and when he got through he said what do you want. You want some rooms? No, we want a room, we are four. No, I can't give you a room for four, I can give you a room for two. I said no, we are together, we want a room for four. You see, because we got an agreement that we don't separate. There are funny things going on in the Philippines and then you don't know the situation here. You figure out something over there and then when you come here the picture is different, the reality is different.

From what his teachers had told him, Philip knew he would have to work, but he had no ideas about what kind of work he might find.

"You see young people didn't know, I didn't even think about that. I just had the idea that I would be educated and then I go to work ... now what work I would get, I don't know. I was too young to understand. I didn't realize that when I was here I would be by myself. Because all the time my folks were feeding me and I didn't work for my meals. See that's why I was not realistic -- but that's the trouble with young people, they don't know. So I came over here and I thought that when I get here I would go to school. But where shall I get money?"

His first job was at a box factory at Cosmopolis, Washington, a job he got through a relative. Soon after his arrival on the job there was a strike.

"But I was laid off before the strike in the wintertime. Anyway, you could see that the strike was again on national lines because the Filipinos were striking and the other workers were not."

Following this, Philip went to North Dakota in 1928 to find a job:

" ... and that was the first time that I worked on a farm... We were just on Main Street in Spokane and saw ads that said they were going to pay our fare. So we went, five of us. The name of the town was Manville. We worked for a farmer, not that big, he had only 35 acres of sugar beets. We stayed there only two months. After two months, I got \$35. Each of us got only \$25 after paying our groceries. But it was not enough for us to move back to Spokane, Washington. So three of us decided we were going to Chicago, and two of us went to Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, we didn't know anybody. Then I met another classmate from Vigan. So we went to his house and we slept in their apartment and later we got a job in the Dackman Hotel in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And then we went back to Spokane, Washington in wintertime and then went to school there. Then in 1934 we went to Chicago with a friend, and then I lived there until 1942. 1942 was when I was drafted into the army and they sent me to San Luis Obispo here in California."

As early as the year of his arrival Philip was intent upon getting the education he had come here for. Since he left the Philippines before graduating from high school, he enrolled at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Washington in 1927 to complete his high school education. He left a restaurant job he had in order to enroll. He found a job as a

"school boy", a person that worked for a family cleaning house, and doing other odd jobs.

"But then I could not really continue because the people I worked for, the family, was not so good. So I lost that semester and that winter I didn't have any money. I was also working in a restaurant somewhere. Then I lost that and then somehow ... when I got in a better situation, I went back to school."

While in Minneapolis, Minnesota he again attempted to resume his high school education.

"In Minneapolis, Minnesota I went to West High School. While a student there I worked as a busboy in a restaurant, that was in 1928. But around that time my father died and I also quit school. So again I wasted some time there. I went back to Spokane, Washington in the winter, I don't know if it was already 1929, but it was wintertime. So I again worked over there in Spokane, Washington. I think I worked in a country club. Then later on, I got some money and went back to school, still at Lewis and Clark High School. I did that until I graduated at Lewis and Clark. Then I went to Gonzaga University for a year.

"My main reason for coming here was education, but I got two problems. First, my family and second was the economic conditions. I could not really go through school because my brother and sister were growing up, and I didn't want them to get married or something, then they can't go to school anymore. So I wrote my mother and told her to send Lenor to school and don't let them stop and I'll be helping. I said don't worry, but I was only making \$2.00 a day at that time.

"I went to Gonzaga University for a year and then my responsibilities began to put pressure on me. And I know that my mother got nothing and so I got to help them out. So I got to make a decision. Of course I had in mind to get as

much education as I could, but I decided to give up my studies for a while and continue to educate them.

"I don't think I would be very happy if I succeed to a certain extent and then my brother and my sister don't get an education. Even if they are happy because I'm their brother, but what about me towards them? I will be feeling guilty because I used whatever our parents got and they were denied of it. So I thought I should compensate and give them their share also. And the only think I could do was to work myself and give to them, because I have already spent what our family's got. My intention was to get them educated. Then later on when they get through I would go back to school. But when I got through with them I was broke. I could not go back. I could not even take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights because I had to work.

"Anyway while I was working and sending a little money, I was also taking some night courses through the Washington extension division of Pullman State College. I did this for one semester and that was the extent of my formal education. I wanted to take up law, but I could not make it anymore. I was hoping that I could get through with them earlier. But you see, I started supporting my brother when he was in the third and my sister was in the second grade. Well, they finished high school, but the war interferred. Then after the war he went to the city and took up law. See how long it took me to support him? He was already a lawyer in 1949 and I was still giving him some money.

"But I continued my hobby of reading. I just picked things at random, anything that interested me. I was not guided by anything. And then I still continued going to the library whenever I got the chance and picked up books, buy books, and read newspapers and magazines. I had that habit since I was in the Philippines, and I still got it.

"But, as I said, the conditions were not favorable. Like when we came in we were about to come to the depression.

I came in 1926, the depression hit 1930. The other thing you got is the racial prejudice. The equal opportunity I was talking about, was a mess. It was not there. It was in the books. It was on the mouths of the American teachers in the Philippines, but it did not work that way."

It did not take long for them to realize that the likelihood of fulfilling their aspirations for professional training was fairly impossible. Their situation was, in fact, objectively desparate and for immigrants in particular, this meant finding work wherever one could find it, while contending with the overt racism of individuals and institutions. Their exposure to such harsh conditions of economic decline and racial injustice broadened their outlook and moved them from naive "newcomer" to conscious and resistant activists.

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE OF FIRST WAVE OF FILIPINOS

The majority of Filipinos were employed as farm laborers and domestic workers. The 1930 Census cites 17,703 Filipino farm laborers and 11,777 domestic workers (figures include both male and female) out of a total working population (10 years and older) of 42,964.²⁹ Farm work included harvesting fruit and vegetables, pruning, spraying of fruit trees, farm cultivation and doing general work required on a farm or ranch. Domestic work included houseboys, waiters, busboys, cooks, chauffers, valets, elevator boys, butlers, bell boys, janitors. Filipinos, however, were engaged in other work areas, but none to any significant number. The 1930 Census indicated such work areas and number employed as laborers in steam and street railroad (721); sailors and deck hands (760); soldiers, sailors, marines (772); musicians and teachers of music (159); clerks/clerical (476).

There were also clergymen, photographers, teachers, lawyers, technical engineers, trained nurses but all numbering less than 40 nationwide in each sector.

Agribusiness was by far the principle employer of Filipinos and mainly in California. Sixty percent of the Filipino population were gainfully employed in agriculture. Of those employed in agriculture, 98.6% were farm laborers -- this represented only 8% of all farm laborers in California.³⁰ Filipinos were mainly employed on farms of over 640 acres.³¹

There were relatively few workers who had year-round jobs on the same farm. Most followed a migratory cycle. A typical migration pattern began in Central California where workers harvested fruit, beans, lettuce, tomatoes, then moved south to work in oranges, olives, etc. Then around March, general work which included pruning, spraying, farm cultivation. May, June, July and August involved fruit picking (lemons, oranges, apples, pears) and vegetable picking (beets, celery, hops, asparagus) and harvesting. August and September, workers would either go back to the city or go to Alaska to work in the canneries. Some workers starting in early spring (mainly students) found employment in summer resorts, camps and clubs during May, June, July and August. They would work as busboys, waiters, dishwashers, houseboys, pantrymen. Some of these workers would either go back to the city or go on to Alaska.³²

Filipinos eventually "specialized" in stoop labor. Beginning in 1923 Filipinos began to occupy much of the labor force in the asparagus fields of the Delta region in the San Joaquin Valley. By 1930, an estimated 5,000³³ to 6,000³⁴ Filipinos worked in asparagus in one season -- representing over 80%³⁵ of the work force. In 1939 approximately 7% of the

93,000 beat workers (nationwide) were Filipino.³⁶ California had
 16,500 workers with one-fourth being Filipino.³⁷

Filipinos moved into other crops in sizable numbers. Tomato fields and potato picking were being dominated by Filipinos. The lettuce and carrot fields in Salinas were almost exclusively worked by Filipinos under Filipino contractors. In the Santa Clara Valley one of the largest rose-growing nurseries in the world exclusively employed Filipinos in budding roses.³⁸

Because Filipinos were classified as "nationals" and employed in jobs outside of the realm of organized industrial labor, Filipinos did not have access to laws governing the rights of workers. They had no protection from work related accidents and no workmen's compensation. The state minimum and maximum hour laws did not apply to farm labor. Residential requirements prevented access to many relief agencies. The demands raised during the numerous strikes from 1928 to 1938 gave an idea of the living and working conditions of the Filipino farm laborers. Workers demanded an 8-hour day. It was common to start work at 6 a.m. and not return until the sun had set. Wage increase was the demand of every strike, plus overtime pay for Sundays and holidays. Pay day was not regularized, sometimes coming weekly, monthly or at times not until the season was over. Union recognition was another frequent demand. Seniority rights for workers was yet another demand. It was common for the contractors to charge for transportation to and from work. Other charges included housing which many times were delapidated and unsanitary. Workers demanded clean water on the job. The "stoop labor" of which the Filipinos composed a high portion, was backbreaking and unbearable under the hot summer sun.³⁹

Many times camp conditions did not meet public health standards. But growers, rather than make the necessary repairs, found it cheaper to pay a fine, thus leaving the workers to live in substandard housing. Some camps would charge \$2 per month for the use of a cot.⁴⁰

ECONOMIC CRISIS SPARKS LABOR ORGANIZING

In the period of the 1920's and 1930's when Filipinos entered in greatest numbers, the U.S. was quickly approaching capitalist self-destruction. The "prosperity" of the 1920's had been deceiving. While big business celebrated rapid commercial expansion most of the rest of the country was already getting a taste of what was to come. Immigrants, Third World peoples, and even white workers on the periphery of the economy, were already experiencing the crisis that would engulf the whole world.⁴¹

The depression was like some natural physical catastrophe. It was understood by the average man as if it were a natural disaster of nature. It continued year after year, 1929, 30, 31, 32, 33 getting worse and worse, stronger and stronger, stripping millions of jobs and shelter, forcing millions to the homeless road; spreading to Latin America and Europe, enveloping nations and continents, the proud empire of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and the Balkans and all of Africa and Asia. World production fell by 42 percent while world trade decreased by 65 percent. There were some fifty million unemployed in all parts of the world.⁴¹

In the U.S. 25 billions of dollars of stock values were wiped out almost overnight. Some 5,761 banks failed; gross farm income dropped from 12 billions of dollars to a little over 45 billions. Wage cuts came one after the other until they averaged 45% for all industry. Industrial

production dropped by almost fifty percent. By 1933 there were anywhere from 12,000,000 to 17,000,000 unemployed.⁴² People were starving while food was being thrown away because it could not be sold for a profit. Thousands of people were evicted from homes.

In response hundreds and thousands in the ranks of the unemployed began to find each other and organize spontaneously.

The first nationwide protest against unemployment was called by the Trade Union Unity League (a broad coalition of unions unhappy with the AFL) and the Community Party on March 6, 1930. Despite fierce repression the unemployment movement strengthened and grew forcing national recognition of their demands for unemployment insurance. Day by day the crisis worsened.

The growing discontent forced a decisive response from government. Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected in the midst of this crisis, began his term in a time that exposed the promises of capitalism for what they were worth. But with the militance and unity of the people, particularly in labor, the weakness of capitalism was thoroughly exposed as the single most culprit in this catastrophe. Roosevelt responded with legislation, reforms to save the menaced capitalist system and quiet the growing revolutionary sentiments. Among the first actions of the New Deal was the passage in 1933 of the National Industrial Recovery Act. This carried for labor the much sought for stipulation -- Section 7 (A) -- that made it a matter of law that workers be allowed to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.

This opportunity was seized upon by the workers. In 1933 more than 900,000 workers went out on strike for union recognition and wage increases

three times more than the previous year. Trade union membership zoomed as 775,000 workers joined unions, labor organizations and associations -- 500,000 into the AFL, 150,000 into independent unions, and 125,000 into the Trade Union Unity League. In 1933 alone the TUUL conducted strikes of 16,000 auto workers in Detroit, 5,000 - 6,000 steel workers in Cambridge, Pennsylvania and 2,700 meat packers in Pittsburg, Pa.⁴³

The strike wave continued into 1934 when mass picket lines increased to nearly a million and a half workers. In 1935, 1,150,000 were on strike fighting for union recognition and improved working conditions. Some 18,000 were arrested and jailed. From 1934 to 1936 eighty-eight workers lost their lives in strikes.⁴⁴

The affects in agriculture were equally explosive. There had been little illusion of prosperity in farm labor wages so the depression was felt even more severely. Farm wages dropped from 30 cents an hour to 15 cents an hour and 12-1/2 cents an hour for field labor. The state minimum wage for women in canneries fell from 33-1/2 cents to 30 cents to 27 cents an hour.⁴⁵

The 1930's was a decade of farm strikes. Between 1930 and 1939, a Senate investigation counted 140 farm strikes in California about 1/2 that took place in the U.S. that year. This included 127,000 workers, 71% of the national total.⁴⁶

OVERVIEW OF FARM LABOR ORGANIZING DURING THIS PERIOD

Organizing among agricultural workers was not a new movement. It had been going on for decades in spite of organized labor's historic negligence. A union formed by Japanese and Mexicans in 1902 asking for

an AFL Charter was only one example of the long succession of unions that were denied membership.

The International Workers of the World (IWW) formed the first broadly based farm workers union in 1915, the Agricultural Workers Organization. The AWO was very successful, but began to lose popularity with their anti-war activities opposing WWI as a businessman's war. This made them very vulnerable to growers and AFL leadership attacks.⁴⁷ By 1924 the systematic suppression by the Justice Department and the enforcement of the Criminal Syndicalism Law which forbade "advocacy, teaching or aiding and abetting the commission of crime sabotage ... or unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing a change in industrial ownership or control, or effecting any political change," was enough to destroy the IWW. The AWO retained one local in California, but was gone by 1926.

By the 1920's California's agricultural labor force was no longer predominantly Asian although it was still predominantly imported. The Immigration Act of 1924 had essentially halted all immigration from Asia. The labor force was then made up of Asians already in California: Japanese, East Indians, Koreans, middle Easterners and a growing number of Mexicans. Labor organizing was made more difficult with the separation by language and culture. Worker solidarity was hampered by contractors who perpetuated separation by ethnic groups, and discouraged organizing by fostering suspicions between groups.

The AFL's historic resistance to organizing farm workers left the field open to the formation of ethnic mutual aid associations, the organizing efforts of communists and socialists, as well as spontaneous forms

of organizing around specific demands.

In November 1927, the Federation of Mexican Societies called upon all mutual aid and benefit organizations to give financial and moral support to organizing Mexican workers in unions. Shortly after the Confederacion de Unions Obreras Mexicanos (CUOM) was formed by a number of locals. This was the most important Mexican labor organization.

Organizing the unorganized was taking place on other fronts. In 1925 Southern California communist party members organized the Japanese Workers Association. In 1927, Karl Yoneda (who took his first name from Karl Marx) organized the Southern California Organizing Committee.

In the vacuum created by organized labor's neglect, the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) which was mainly communist-organized was formed in 1928. Through formations like associations, mutuals, and unions, the TUUL initiated a series of organizing campaigns for the next three decades which also involved the CIO and AFL and other independent unions, especially among Mexicans. Organizing efforts were relatively simple -- demand wage increases and recognition of the committee. Communists who were sent to the agricultural fields to organize were composed of Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and whites. The TUUL was involved in the majority of farm strikes: January 1930, strike of 5,000 in Imperial Valley; February 1930, 7,000 lettuce shed workers; July 1931, 1,500 cannery workers in Santa Clara County 1932, 1,500 pea pickers in San Mateo County.⁴⁸

In the early months of 1930, the TUUL succeeded in establishing the Agricultural Workers Industrial League with headquarters in Brawley, California, in the heart of Imperial Valley. This union embraced all farm workers -- Mexican, Filipino and Anglo. Shortly after it became the Agri-

cultural Workers Industrial Union and the following year a new name described its enlarged jurisdiction, Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU).

In 1935, the Communist Party dissolved the CAWIU and TUUL as part of a "popular front" policy. There would no longer be an independent communist labor movement, henceforth the party's labor organizers were to work within the AFL.⁴⁹

Former CAWIU members tried to set up the International Union of Agricultural Workers within the AFL, but again the AFL refused. During this period some AFL leaders talked of organizing farm workers, but were afraid of entrenched growers power, so there was very little AFL organizing activity or strikes in agriculture between the fall of the AWU in 1926 and the rise of the CP organizing in 1930's.

FILIPINO EXPERIENCES IN FARM LABOR ORGANIZING

Farm labor organizing in the period before serious recognition by big union internationals (prior to 1936) was characterized by spontaneous organizing by independent unions or ethnic organizations. One of the first examples of this among Filipino farm workers was a strike in February 1928 of asparagus workers in Stockton. In the years following, Filipinos participated in strikes involving a few strikers to several thousands. (See Table 1, Appendix)

Attempts at forming unions locally met with some success, but the character of migratory work made it difficult to maintain unions because of the constant turnover in workers from year to year. From 1932-34 many Filipinos worked closely with the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Indus-

trial Union (C&AWIU) in its organizing efforts mainly in California. California agriculture was a hotbed of organizing during this period. "More than half of the farm strikes that occurred in the U.S. in 1933, and four-fifths of all strikes, were in California. Approximately three-fourths of the strikes, covering dozens of crops and four-fifths of the more than 48,000 workers who participated in that state, were led by the C&AWIU."⁵⁰ For Filipinos, the C&AWIU was a valuable testing ground for farm labor organizing. Many Filipino organizers can trace their early experiences to this union.

After the dissolution of the C&AWIU in 1934 the level of Filipino organizing and farm worker organizing in general in California dropped. This did not mean that strikes stopped altogether. Filipinos organized into many independent unions: in Stockton there was the Filipino Labor Association, Filipino Labor Supply Association, and the Filipino Agricultural Labor Association (FALA); from the Salinas area there was the Philippine Labor Chamber; from Santa Maria Valley, the Guadalupe Filipino Labor Economic Endeavor; from the Central Valley, the Filipino United Labor Association of San Joaquin Valley (Delano); and the Filipino Unity Labor Association (Dinuba); from Fresno the Filipino Labor Association and again from the Santa Maria Valley -- Guadalupe, the Filipino Labor Union, Inc. (which eventually organized seven branches by 1935).

Recognizing the inherent weaknesses of independent union organizing a movement began in the 1930's to build a statewide union. Filipino workers supported the movement for a statewide union. Filipino independent unions along with Mexican independent unions saw strength in unity with other field workers, the AF of L and other unions. The more left leaning Filipinos favored state affiliation⁵¹ though the AF of L under

a general federation of agricultural and allied workers in California. Filipino workers and unions were part of an organizing conference in Stockton June 6-7, 1936 which resolved to establish a state federation of Agricultural, Cannery and Packing Workers and called for \$3 per 8-hour day with overtime pay for seasonal farm workers and \$65 per month with board for year round workers.⁵² The Filipino Labor Union was one organization that participated in that movement. The proposal was presented before the executive council of the California State Federation of Labor, but was rejected. This prompted the formation of the California Federation of Agricultural and Cannery Unions, by participants of the June 6-7 conference.

Of the Filipino independent unions, two were particularly influential -- the Filipino Labor Union, Inc. (Guadalupe) and the Filipino Agricultural Labor Association (Stockton). The FLU was at the forefront of the Salinas Lettuce Strike of 1934 (one of 20 or more Filipino labor disputes between 1930 and 1936). This strike signified a seminal turning point in the changing attitude of Filipino casual labor toward union organization, for it marked the beginning of increased militance among Filipino workers.⁵³

Their vigilance in pressing for wage increases despite violent retaliation by growers and white workers alike won not only a 30 cent hourly increase (from 10 cents to 40 cents an hour), but formal recognition of the FLU as the legitimate negotiation agency for Filipino labor. Its broader significance though was that it marked for Filipinos the successful unionization of Filipinos.⁵⁴

Al and Leo both, while not directly involved in this particular

strike, were among those Filipinos in California called to the scene by the union's request for assistance from other Filipinos. For them it served as an example of the type of response that would be required of Filipinos who were serious about improving the conditions of their fellow farm workers.

Leo: "Oh, it was really worse than anything that you can see, because most of the farmworkers, especially the Filipinos, you know, they were starving; they had to live in conditions that we have never had in the Islands and naturally with those kinds of conditions it's either we want to elevate ourselves and try to live as human beings; or live like dogs. But then the employers with some of their stooges and cronies tried to prevent us from winning a lot of people over to the idea that they should have better conditions."

Al: "Oh boy, that was a very big strike, too. They really wanted to demand good conditions and also good wages. I was not in Salinas then ... let me see, I was in Porterville but when we heard about this strike some of us went in there just to observe the conditions. Because we are six in a company and we have a car. So that when we heard this situation in Salinas, we went in there. I think ... I really remember, there were also killing in there.

"But by the time we got there, it was a little bit quiet. Everything is still unsettled, but it was quiet on account of the killing. So I did not really participate in what you call strike. I was a kind of observer on that one."

The Filipino Labor Union, Inc. split in early 1937 over the question

of affiliation with the AFL.⁵⁵ The group that split from the Filipino Labor Union, Inc. became known as the Filipino Labor Union, Unincorporated. This latter group favored working with other labor organizations whereas the former preferred racial exclusion and opposed affiliation with any other labor union. The Filipino Labor Union, Unincorporated, was considered by most to be the more left leaning of the two unions. "Led by Secretary C.D. Mensalves (a proposal was made) to organize a sympathetic walkout of Filipino field workers in support of the AF of L Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union #13211. When this move was opposed by other affiliates of the union, Mensalves and his supporters withdrew and formed the separate Filipino Laobr Union, Unincorporated. This organization attended the convention at Denver in July 1937 and was later absorbed into the CIO's new international, the UCAPAWA (United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America).⁵⁶

Later in the year there was a second split from the original Filipino Labor Union, Inc. The Philippine Islands Labor Union, Inc. was formed in Santa Maria Valley and worked in cooperation with the local Mexican Labor Union.

Spontaneous organizing and strikes were common occurrences in the wake of the devastating conditions. Hundreds of workers who might not normally see themselves as leaders or radicals found no other recourse but to confront growers with demands for a decent livelihood. Al's own experience at organizing a strike of Delano grape growers in the early 1930's is only one example of the hundreds of spontaneous responses that disrupted the agricultural scene in the 1930's.

Al: "In Delano at that time, there were three companies

that wanted to revoke our demand for more wages.

... I was one of the author of that strike; we never knew any strike yet. I even myself didn't know about strike. When I first found out that the price of grapes are getting higher, then I said to my boss, 'Well, boss, this is the time for us to get better wages from our foreman.' And he said, 'Why not? Well, we might invite some of these different camps. If they want it, then we will do something about it.' So when we went around, the three of us ... three camps joined us. They like the idea you know. We went about ten days to solicit the other different camps around Delano and Porterville.

"But the grapes were not yet about to be harvested. That's why I wanted to start because they are a lot to be harvested. When the time when there would be harvest then that would be the time when we are going to strike! That was my intention and I think ... let me see ... eight camps instead of three already allied around Delano. But the strategy I told the people when we had the meeting is this: before we strike, we ought to have some groceries ... because we can borrow our groceries from the Japanese grocerers, and deposit all these groceries in a Filipino store, inside the city of Delano. And I contacted them because he (the owner) was my townsman. And he agreed with the idea that we are going to deposit all the food in there. We demand higher wages from the president of the Farmer's Association. He said, 'No, I cannot do that.' 'Okay, if you cannot do that, we are going out of your camp.' So everybody got their clothing and went to town. And our headquarters was in that Filipino store. After about a week, they invited us to attend another meeting. 'So, okay, instead of giving you your fifty cents, we give you 65 cents. So if you want that, you start tomorrow and we'll give you 65 cents.' 'Wait sir, I'm going to talk with the boys.'

Then I told them the decision, but I told them this is now our time to make more ... if you like me. They said, go ahead. So I went back in there and said, 'We'll not come back tomorrow and work there.' 'Why not, we'll give you 65 cents.' 'But do you know how many dollars we also lose by not giving us two days work?' 'So instead of giving us 65 cents, give us 75 cents an hour, I demand, or get any kind of pickers you want, because this is our last (offer). We will not come and talk with you no more. Seventy-five cents an hour or get another pickers.' So I left them. The next day, they came to us 'alright, come back boys, we'll give you 75 cents.' So that was the first time that I really encountered a strike even though it was not yet a union; it was like a union."

The spontaneity that characterized this whole period involved hundreds of thousands of farm workers. For many, this experience was to be their last militant act, but for many others these spontaneous outbursts became steeling experiences that inspired them to take on more conscious organizing with longer-range goals, and a continuous day-to-day commitment. In the examples cited here, both Al and Leo, having suffered the abuses of exploitative farm jobs coupled with some positive organizing experiences, went on to participate in the building of a union of cannery workers whose early success laid a strong foundation for its continuing existence to this day.

ORGANIZING ALASKA CANNERY WORKERS

It was not until the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organizations in 1935 (later to become the Congress of Industrial Organizations) that farm labor received serious recognition by a big international

union in the form of the CIO affiliated United Cannery, Agricultural Packing and Allied Workers' of America (UCAPAWA). Under the CIO-UCAPAWA, major organizing breakthroughs were being made in agriculture. The CIO had recaptured what the IWW had for a short time, the sense that the period of defeat had to be turned around. "The triumph of the CIO brought with it many firsts: the first time in history a drive to organize the millions of unskilled workers in basic industry was to get underway backed by established organizations with millions of dollars and adequate experience; the first time thousands of negroes were organized into the new industrial union; the first time thousands of working women were admitted into mass industrial unions."⁵⁷ By the time the CIO had changed its name to the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1938, the CIO had become a permanent organization with nearly 4,000,000 members.⁵⁸ The organizational expression of this drive to organize workers in agriculture was the UCAPAWA. For most sectors of the agricultural working class, the UCAPAWA represented the answer they had been working for, for so many years.

The UCAPAWA facilitated the unionization of the Alaska cannery workers, the arena where both Al and Leo would gain their most concrete, conscious organizing experiences. The organizing of cannery workers had been attempted in previous years but without success. The heterogeneity of cannery labor, diversity in language, and pressure to make money, made organizing a difficult task.

The development of fast and automatic canning machines and the consequent changes it occasioned, the strong desire of the workers themselves to improve their lot, and the number of cannery men who began to

recognize the evils of the contracting system ... are factors which spawned the idea of unionism.⁵⁹ The other factors being the strong union climate of the times, and the receptivity of the CIO to agriculture organizing.

By the early 1930's Filipinos made up the bulk of canners in the Alaska salmon industry. Leo and Al had both been part of this annually migrating group since their arrival in 1926. It was one of their better sources of income. But the conditions under which they worked to make this money were miserable.

The organizing of this sector of agricultural workers was only one example of the general mood of workers to assert their right to decent wages and better work conditions.

LEO: * "Everything involved in the canning industry made it ripe for organizing. To begin with, the living conditions, wages, and attitudes towards the workers .. You are not treated like the men from the fishermen's union or the carpenter's union (the management) they would just throw anything to you ... if it's fish heads for lunch, that's all you get. But out there in the fisherman's or carpenter's unions, they were just living like a regular American family.

"Well, you see, there was only one big international at that time, that's the AFL and well, some of the Filipinos, the Filipino leaders wanted to be able to have a union. We have to ally ourselves to the AFL, at that time, but the AFL did not want to have Filipinos with them. But we kept on because it was impossible with life and conditions in the canneries. For example, for breakfast there was nothing. All they give you is hardboiled eggs and then you go and work in the cannery in that cold and

* Personal Interview with Leo Lorenzo, August 19, 1978.

things like that. It was really impossible for any hard working person to exist that whole day with the kind of food they served. Those were the reasons that we organized ourselves so that we could improve the conditions that we had.

"At first in the canneries, we worked under the contracting system. The employers are the ones responsible for everything; hiring, firing and most of the foremen were Japanese and one, two ... two contractors were Filipino, one was already established with the canning industry. His name was Pedro Santos and later on, when the workers like the Filipinos were increasing in number and they were beginning to see that there should be some improvements in the living conditions in the canneries, they started to campaign for better living conditions and the contractors were beginning to see that there were some sort of activity, something like an activist program! Oh, they didn't like it! Because then their profits were getting reduced because the demands were getting greater and then, more from California were coming in with us in Portland and San Francisco. They were operating some canneries in Alaska, too, but the Filipinos were getting more, you know, in a way that they wanted more of what services they can get ... The cannery workers were mainly Filipinos by that time because there were not many Chinese and Japanese left. You see, the Japanese were out. Because they got rid of the contractor system and they went into other areas. And besides, they have to establish themselves in business. Well, when the late Duyungan^{*} and those first labor leaders realized that the Filipinos were the bulwark of the canned

* Virgil S. Duyungan was the initial organizer of the Cannery Worker and Farm Laborer's Union in 1933. He was born in the Philippines, but came to the United States in 1917, working many seasons in the salmon canneries of Alaska and other parts of the Pacific Coast. He was murdered only three years after forming the cannery workers' union by a member of a rival union.⁶⁰

salmon industry, they noticed that without them, the fishing industry would not operate as good and as efficiently with other ethnic groups doing the work. That's the reason why they had to demand, and if their demands were not accepted they began to be, not exactly rebellious, but they were not hesitant to do things. That's when they organized the labor unions.

"There was still some resistance because, especially the Filipino labor contractors, they didn't want their incomes to be cut off and they didn't want to be excluded from being a big man in the canneries. Later on, they and their followers were not able to stand the progressive act of the majority of the Filipinos so either they get out or to be with us. That was the beginning of the mobilization of better living conditions and there came some of the more intellectual Filipinos for leadership.

"Later on, as I told you before, the AFL was the only famous labor union at the time in this part of the country. As a matter of fact, it was the only labor union all over the U.S. But, fighting to be able to be with the AFL was really impossible. They were not responsive to different minority groups that wanted to become affiliated with them. They were not, even responsive in the culinary jobs, they didn't want Filipinos to become members. You see there was a lot of racism in the AFL at that time. Most of the lower jobs in the restaurants were mostly Orientals and the majority were Filipinos. There were some more progressive leaders of the union that wanted to be involved not only the American citizens, but also the different races like the Orientals, the Spanish and the Negroes. So that's when the CIO came into existence, they took a different charter and established a Congress of Industrial Organizations. So that was the only alternative for us to be in the labor union because the CIO accepted our application.

You see, they were more lenient in their organization. They wanted all the working people to be organized, that was the purpose, there was no regionalism, no sectionalism involved in their international.

"Our leaders noticed that the CIO and the Mine Workers Union and the AF of L were getting good concessions because they were well organized. That was the prime attitude of our labor leaders. If those people can organize, they say, why can't we organize? That was the beginning of the organization of the labor movement of Filipinos going to Alaska. Yes, they wanted the Filipinos to be with them or let's say, the Asians to be with them in the CIO. As a matter of fact, they would send representatives when we went on negotiations for our contracts going to the canneries and of course, they were already versed and lined up to have their program more progressive than the program initiated by the AFL. One of them was Conrad Espe, and another one is, ... his name was Harding ... and these were some of the guys that helped some of our leaders to be more versed on labor. They were directly from the CIO, this was during the early 1930's and the late 30's."

AL: * "When they first started the Alaska Cannery Union I was involved in it. As I said, on those years, we don't have no union yet, except the AF of L. And the AFL does not include Alaska or the farmworker. It's only the culinary job in the city so we don't have that kind of union then. But in 1934, if I'm not mistaken, 1934 or 36, like that, when the CIO-UCAPAWA was organized here in Seattle, organized by a Filipino by the name of Duyungan then that was it, that was the first start of the unionism among the Filipinos. We tried to strike before, but we don't have no union yet to organize ourselves, see? But when this UCAPAWA-CIO was organized

* Personal Interview with Al Masigat, August 18, 1978.

then we have.

"People were willing to unionize. The condition of our countrymen working in there was like dogs. I call it like dogs because I myself was in there and when I see how they were treated, especially our meals, sometimes we ate only two times a day! Sometimes we eat three times, but maybe the same food, the same food, the same food all over! And I don't care to eat the same food if I'm not working hard, but you see you had to work hard in those days. In those days, before you get your overtime, you have to put in 12 hours, from 6 to 6. And we don't have no coffee break, just eat in the morning, maybe they give you only two pieces of bread, no butter, no eggs, no bacon, no nothing and noontime, they give you only the fish heads and mungo and in the night time, for dinner, they give you again fried fish, that's all. You work til 4 or 5 in the morning! See if you figure it out, how these elderly can endure those jobs before, you would be surprised! How did they do it? I myself now is wondering how I did it. But we did it anyway as I told you. That's why they like Filipinos, because when we went to Alaska on those years, we do not work like by the hour but we work like on contract. Fast, fast all the time! That's why even ten white guys come to ask for jobs in Alaska, they do not like them see? They like the Filipinos, I mean the Orientals, Chinese, Japanese, like that, on account of that condition. They work hard, harder than anybody. They are just wondering how these Oriental people can do it with the kind of food and what nourishment that you have. Like me, you see the first time I went to Alaska, you know what I did in the kitchen? One night I was so hungry, you know, I convinced six of the Japanese and three Filipinos -- there were 35 Japanese and only seven Filipinos in that cannery-- and we stole all the food there. Oh, boy, when the cook

looked for somethin, no more! We were too hungry! We went across the bay, took a small boat and had a picnic there.

"Well, I think that in all those kinds of hardship that we have, we are beginning to get educated, especially when we have a Mr. Bulosan. He wrote articles encouraging to his countrymen to wake up. He said wake up! We wanted to stand up for our rights for better condition of living, that was the spirit then at the time, especially when the organizer, the real founder was shot down and killed, then that was it! That really awaken everybody!

" I did not have the opportunity to be one of the officers or staff, but supposing they want a strike or supposing they want a demonstration then I was there, you know? That was the only thing I did at first. The only way I got involved as an officer was when I had been a delegate then you're job is like a lawyer to your crew. You are the one responsible in seeing that the company should keep the contract between the union and the company. If they violate it then you are the one that sees to it that they are going to serve it."

While the course of the union's development would take it through many twists and turns in the succeeding years, initially the union was a tremendous advancement over the earlier situation. By about 1935 the entire non-resident personnel in the Alaska canned salmon industry were unionized. Unions were signing contracts either directly with canning companies or with the Alaska Salmon Industry, Inc., which represented its members.⁶¹

PHILIP VERA CRUZ: * Proletarianization in the City

Philip's experience during the Depression of the 1930's was different in form only. In essence he suffered from the same exploitative,

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, September 9, 1978.

oppressive, racist conditions as did Al and Leo. But his work experience was urban. During the Depression he live in Chicago. (It was not until he was drafted for the second World War that he even came to California.) But the process of proletarianization was nonetheless the same although his immediate response was not expressed in unionizing.

While he was keenly aware of the growing labor movement overall he consciously avoided any direct involvement fearing interruption of his responsibility to support his family, especially at a time when his brother and sister were going to school. His primary commitment at this period was to repay his family for the sacrifices they had endured to support his education. So the intellectual potentials and organizing skills that would emerge more concretely during the struggle in Delano was initially utilized during his years in Chicago in the service of numerous social organizations in the Filipino community.

"Well, when I was in Chicago, there were about three thousand Filipinos there. I think it was kind of recovery at that time, we were recovering from the depression. In Chicago, its kind of a different atmosphere.

"I'm the kind of guy that finds it easy to make friends. Not just because I say so, but because it's true. I easily penetrate if I want to. But there are also things that I try to avoid too. Sometimes people really want me to do something, but I don't want to because I don't like what they're doing. And I don't want to get involved in what they're doing. But in Chicago, I belonged to a lot of different organizations.

"That's all I could do. Nobody wants to give me a chance to be developed as a businessman, nobody wants to help me to go to school. I'm not even welcome in their groups. The only thing I could do was to be with my own

people. The primary reason we get together is because we are segregated. So even if you kind of fight one another, still we got to stay together.

"Like for instance, I belonged to the United Pangasinan. They're the biggest organization there. I belonged to the Ilocos Sur Club, of which I was not very active, I belong to the Civic Club, I belong to the Mindanao fraternity, and I belong to the Debating Club and I also belong to the Literary Club.

"But these organizations were all social. The only time we get some education is when we have some kind of celebration or banquet or something when some people make speeches or something like that. But no one follows through. Like when we have some Rizal day, someone talks about economics, politics, everything, but after that speech nothing. Next year they all go again to honor Dr. Rizal and talk the same bullshit, you know, and do nothing.

"The only issue that united Filipinos was independence. When you talk about nationalism, it's funny, everybody likes it.

"The Literary Club as the most serious. We got a little paper that publishes stuff that Filipinos wrote. They needed some kind of outlet. We write the news and we also write something interpreting what's going on.

"I was the president of that club. The funny part of the Literary Club was that we got two radicals, we got liberals and we got kind of conservatives. So I was the only one they could put in there as president because they were all my friends. I don't go into confrontation with people then, but I got my own principles. You got to be kind of in the middle. But when I speak, I speak very radical. They call me CIO^{*} over there; they know my politics, but they like me. Even my conservative friends dealt with me.

* CIO, meaning Congress of Industrial Organizations was a symbol of radicalism.

"We have people coming around but I think very few are progressive, mostly on the conservative side, so you cannot be so blunt in your newspaper. We barely touch the Marxist things, even though we got radicals coming in sometimes. They were my friends. They were in the Young Communist League. But in the Literary Club these radicals didn't talk about it. They didn't put no pressure on you. They understood the people, they were not fanatical about it. I was one that was thinking in the same way, but I didn't belong to any organizations. They invited me to a radical school one time. It was a communist group. The teacher was a black man, I think he was a lawyer from Washington, D.C. Well, I went, but I didn't stay long. I wasn't a member of the Communist Party anyway. Of course I didn't want to because I was not a citizen and I could not afford getting deported, you see? But when it came to the ideas, well, I'm ready to listen and I know what I believe in. There's no law against it. But then when you belong to the Communist Party it's a kind of different story. Because the Communist Party was kind of an outlawed organization at the time.

"I was sympathetic to a lot of these ideas. That's why when I see books I pick up those kind of books. In the public library whether there is Communists there or not, the books are there. Like Marx and some others. Like some socialist books. There's a lot of them. They cannot really ban all the books. While they try not to give you too radical books, there are some kind of rules that say they got to have them in the public library. The only thing is that they don't want to teach you in school. So that's way you got McCarthy because the feelings of the people is like that. See, he was the spokesman of the conservative group of the government. Not all of them is like that, but a lot of them were feeling that way, so that's why it came out."

Unlike Al or Leo, Philip was more aware of political ideologies and made conscious efforts to interact with these ideas through acquaintances and readings. On the other hand, because of this heightened awareness he was sensitive to growing anti-community sentiments and the affect involvement like unionizing might have on carrying-out his obligations to his family.

The other aspect of his failure to take up unionizing at this time was indicative of the history of racism in labor itself. Filipinos like many other minorities had been consciously excluded from those industries where unionizing was most active, the steel and auto industry for instance. Urban Filipinos worked mainly as cooks, busboys and domestics in restaurants and hotels. As workers outside of the industries where organizing efforts were concentrated, the conditions for Filipinos to take this up were not favorable.

While in Chicago, the only union he was involved in was as a restaurant worker.

"It was alright, but I didn't even understand what the union was for. See like they struck our place, but I was even passing through the picket line. I didn't understand, I didn't know. They just wanted the place to be unionized. That was it, and I don't remember anybody that talked to me to explain to me what the union was all about. That was the first time I belonged to a union and I went to the meetings only once or twice. Not too many people are going to the meetings either."

SUMMATION

Proletarianization is not a voluntary decision, nor is it even a conscious phenomenon. It is a process imposed by historical conditions. The contradictions between ones subjective desires and the objective conditions become resolved after much struggle, at times against ones own will, and the contradiction can even re-emerge at another level requiring yet another resolution.

None of these men wanted to resign themselves to a lifetime of unskilled labor. Their vision was to develop their skills through education into a comfortable livelihood for their families as well as for themselves. This period of unskilled labor was to be only a temporary condition until they could stabilize their situation to the point where they could concentrate on their professional training. But their idealism was not matched by the concrete conditions. Their struggle went beyond merely making it through school and became a struggle for survival itself.

Their stand to accept the challenge to assist their fellow workers through labor organizing (in Philip's case this would happen later in his life) represented a break from their petty bourgeois outlook in that they recognized that their situation was the same oppressive condition of the greater working class.

But while this marked an advance for them as individuals the character of unionism itself was changing such that it would further challenge their stand as class conscious forces and demand a deeper commitment on their part to maintain unionism in the interest of the worker.

CHAPTER III

FARM LABOR ORGANIZING AFTER WORLD WAR II

By the 1940's noticable changes had occurred in the balance of forces affecting the progress of farm labor organizing: increased institutionalization of the labor movement, the consolidation of agriculture as big business, the gross conservatism and growing corruption of the labor movement, the growing anti-communist movement and compromised socialist and communist movements in combination acted as retardants to the advancement of farm labor unionism.

In this decade the economic and political establishment called agribusiness reached an advanced stage. Agri-business was essentially the science of farming as a business enterprise. The term described modern agriculture's interdependence with business -- the fertilizer companies, feed manufacturers, trucking concerns, machinery manufacturers, hardware dealers, lumber companies and all the many others who make up the business complex supporting the world's greatest and most productive system of agriculture including electric power utilities, banks and the universities.⁶²

Also, by the late 1940's unionization had become an institution in American politics capable of challenging the strongest powers of the nation. To keep and improve such a position with its corresponding influence and prestige, became the central concern of the labor movement. In this process, much of what unionism originally stood for was compromised. With some unions, power became self-serving as well as self-perpetuating. In some cases it was expressed by capitulation to big business. Its pri-

mary goal was to obtain more for those who were surviving the displacement of man by machines. For those who were being displaced, unionism's only strategy was to offer tactical relief through the advocacy of remedial and protective legislation as a substitute for the economic stability they could no longer get through employment. To this end unionism sought the passage of laws on social security, housing, consumer protection, child welfare, services for the needy and the aging and many other critical areas of social inadequacy.⁶³

But these shortcomings did not go unnoticed by the rank and file. Rank and file responses to the conservatism of unionism was marked by intense struggle within many unions. The Alaska cannery union and the United Farm Workers (in more contemporary times) are two examples of Filipino participation in efforts to combat union conservatism.

The growing dissatisfaction that Al felt about the cannery workers union was related to the weak demands of the union leadership in the late 1940's.

AL: * "I made a proposal that our union demand 5% for every case that we packed. Like the machinists, the mechanics and also these other unions, they had that kind of agreement with the industry. The only union that did not have that agreement was our union. But I lost. Sometimes when I argue with them, the leadership, they get mad and when they get mad either you get involved in a big fight when you go out (outside of the meeting) or somebody's goin' to kill you."

LEO:** " ... they said they have gained alot of concessions but to the eyes of those that were out there during our times (1940's) there was not much being won. In comparison to the kind of the demands of the big unions like demands for better

* Personal Interview with Al Masigat, July 17, 1978.

** Personal Interview with Leo Lorenzo, July 17, 1978.

living conditions, they get it because they know how to present it. But I don't know about our union, if they make such kinds of demands. They don't ask for much. Even the rank and file just kept quiet. They were not as aggressive or progressive as the rank and file of our time. During our time (1930's) the rank and file is the one that formulates the program of the leadership. It was different by the 1950's. During those times the demands were not as high. And there were leaders that wanted to control the union by themselves through company tactics, and of course we didn't want that."

(Twenty years later similar dissatisfaction would be raised about the UFW, in the continuing struggle to keep the union accountable. This struggle will be addressed later in this chapter.)

In its struggle to preserve its position of power the character of union organizing became more business and power conscious at the expense of the militance and concern for the human condition that characterized its earlier rise. In this framework farmworkers were twice disadvantaged. As independent union farmworkers were virtually powerless and isolated against the superstructure that agri-business had developed into. Within the greater brotherhood of labor their cries for support were often ignored since, relative to other unions, the return on union investment in their campaigns was small or nonexistent. In comparison to other industries the meager per capita payments of farmworker unions resulted in chronic deficit spending. Business unionism regarded the outlays for organizing campaigns as investments that would eventually pay off in the form of substantial per capita dues. But farmworker organizing had never paid off, their unions never won substantial contracts.

At the same time, heightening anti-communism and the threat of world war began to quiet the angry militance of the socialist and communist inspired labor movement of the 1930's. War was a sobering and consolidating phenomenon affecting the movement in such a way as to opt for postponement of the struggle for revolutionary change in the U.S.

The farm labor movement as a whole was showing the strain of many years of brutal repression. The UCAPAWA which had been a moving force in the organizing of farm workers was no longer a viable union among field workers. It's rapid decline was accelerated by the anti-communist hysteria that gripped much of the nation affecting the labor movement especially after the war. By 1944 UCAPAWA had changed its name to the Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers of America (FTA) formalizing its withdrawal from any significant organizing of field workers. By 1949, left unions, the FTA included, had for the most part been purged from the CIO.⁶⁵

Feeling the sting of the vicious anti-communist attack the large internationals were essentially dormant. Organizing of field work fell to a few small independent, racially based unions.

The most effective among these, and the most consistently ignored by both the AFL and CIO were the Filipinos. Filipinos worked in crews that were able to out-produce all other workers in such specialty crops as asparagus and brussel sprouts. Recognizing their monopoly in these crops, they began to talk of taking advantage of this position. In March 1938 a conference of Filipino organizations on the Pacific Coast resulted in the formation of the Filipino Agricultural Workers Association which was changed a year later to the Filipino Agricultural Labor Association (FALA). The FALA represented some 7,000 Filipinos in the Stockton area

alone and claimed to represent 30,000 statewide.⁶⁶

This union's most notable success was in the strike of 6,000 Filipino asparagus cutters in the San Joaquin-Sacramento delta in 1939 which resulted in signed agreements with 258 asparagus growers. During the rest of 1939, FALA was successful in negotiating agreements in brussel sprouts in San Mateo County, celery in San Joaquin County, and garlic in San Benito County. The FALA organized workers in other areas such as Pescadero, Hollister, Terminous Island, and Orwood. It was the only organization doing large-scale organizing among farm laborers during 1939-1940.⁶⁷

FALA remained unaffiliated until 1940 when it was chartered by the AFL. But the invasion of the Philippines by Japan brought the work of this union to a premature halt when thousands of Filipinos left the fields to join the U.S. forces. Soon after the union died of AFL neglect.⁶⁸

The period following WWII saw very little organizing in agriculture save the efforts of the National Farm Labor Union which transferred to California from the Mississippi Delta in 1947. When the NFLU made its first contact with California, farmworkers were loosely stratified into three types: domestics, braceros, and undocumented migrants without any legal status as opposed to the predominantly migratory foreign labor of earlier agricultural development in California. Vast differences in culture and social practice separated these groups despite their common class status as rural proletarians, making organizing a difficult task.⁶⁹

Domestics were mainly "Dust Bowl" * refugees and Filipinos. The influx of Anglos to California agriculture during the depression had changed

* Several years of drought in the 1930's drove thousands of small farmers from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and the Texas panhandle called the "Dust Bowl". Between 1935 and 1939, an estimated 140,000 persons, destitute, frantic for work arrived in California.⁷⁰

the character of agricultural labor. Formerly dominated by migratory immigrants the labor force since 1934 was becoming a more stable pool of white families. Filipinos who on the whole never made the transition to urban employment made up the other major grouping of domestic workers. Many had expected to return home with degrees and money or to establish families here by sending to the Islands for brides or marrying local women. But discriminatory laws and practices limited their opportunities for education, limited the immigration of Filipino women, prohibited them from marrying Caucasians, prevented them from buying land and barred them from integration into the community at large. As a result their lack of non-agricultural skills confined them to low-paying farmwork making them among the most isolated foreign workers-- a situation favored by California growers.

But the ideas of a stable, locally rooted labor force was not an encouraging development for agri-business. While agri-business might not have formulated a conscious long-range plan for preventing farm labor insurgency, they had at least learned that the age-old policy of keeping people on the move was much preferable to a labor force with roots from which a strong union could grow. To frustrate the danger, the industry realized that the roots must be cut and perpetual mobility reintroduced as a way of life for harvesters.⁷¹ So it was with much relief that growers found an issue around which to claim a shortage of labor -- WWII.

The use of braceros in great numbers beginning with the outbreak of war in 1942, was probably the singlemost deterrent to farm labor organizing for the next 22 years.

The braceros were suppose to be a supplemental work force, hired only

actment of Public Law 78 in 1953. Painstaking documentation of agribusiness violations of legal requirements and violations of human rights did not make its impact until the crumble of the California Farm Placement Service in 1959 drew attention to the research efforts of the NAWU. The period from 1960 to 1964 was the twilight of the bracero system. It began with the documented attacks of the NAWU exposing agribusiness' treatment of braceros throughout the state and ended with the futile efforts of State and agribusiness in collusion to save the system when it was scheduled to expire in December 1964.

The end of the bracero program marked the beginning of another era in agricultural labor history and paved the way for what would become known as the most decisive strike in farm labor history.

Nineteen hundred and sixty-five was the first year since 1942 that the agricultural labor force was not predominantly bracero. By 1965 agricultural labor was predominantly domestic. The domestic was the core of the labor pool. He tended to become less mobile, resisting the drift around him. His mobility being more in and out of the migrant force, not upward and out of it. This pool consisted of family members, prisoners with passes, students on summer vacations and the urban unemployed. They were an assortment of races, colors and cultures, all detached from their original territorial base. They started out as migrants but in time settled in towns like Arvin, Delano, Soledad, Stockton. Recruitment operated in a variety of ways: 1) Farm labor contractors were still operating in many crops, 2) Church people directed members of their congregation to the fields for work, 3) Day-hauls where workers were transported as far as 50-100 miles were a distinct and important source of manpower, 4) Crew

leaders acted as advance agents for neighbors, friends and relatives,
 5) Filipino social clubs, 6) Some recruits from Mexico by correspondence,
 7) Operators of "flop houses" on skid row connected men and jobs.⁷⁴

The loss of braceros was felt by agri-business immediately. California growers who employed 128,000 braceros in 1964, hired only 21,000 Mexicans under the new program in 1965 and only 7,350 in 1966.⁷⁵ The Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) in 1965 recognized the dilemma this created for the grower and acted to take advantage of it.

The AWOC was set up in 1959 by the CIO to organize the unorganized. "Committee" formations were temporary, giving way to regularly structured, dues-paying bodies appropriately chartered. From its inception, the AWOC was immersed in controversy over jurisdictional disagreements, and general criticism about its method of organizing. By 1965, the AWOC was barely a credible formation among those who were responsible for its existence, but it did have several Filipino organizers who were maintaining close contact with the tightly knit crews of Filipinos who worked in major farm areas. It would be this group of Filipinos who would bring back to life the dormant AWOC.

THE DELANO GRAPE STRIKE - 1965

The grape season in 1965 in Cochella Valley was maturing early with unusually warm weather conditions. This factor with the added pressure of the loss of braceros placed Filipino grape pickers in a particularly advantageous position. Filipino crews had been offered \$1.25/hr, 15¢/hr. less than the minimum wage of \$1.40/hr. So they demanded \$1.40/hr and when the growers resisted they struck under the banner of AWOC.⁷⁶ Unable

to qualify for braceros to fill in for striking crews and anticipating application for supplemental Mexican help (under a special provision) later in the season, growers were forced to agree to the striker's pay demands within ten days.

This tactic was tried again in the Arvin (just outside of Delano) vineyards, but unsuccessfully. Growers were confident that Filipinos would not try a third time since they could find more than enough extra pickers among the 3,500⁷⁷ Mexican-Americans in the area and since the camps where Filipinos lived in the winter months were located on grower property. But the Filipinos decided to strike nonetheless. This spontaneous act of self-determination symbolized the re-birth of the farm labor movement. This strike in the next few months would capture the attention of the growing civil rights movement and come to represent a new concept in labor organizing.

When the strike was called September 8, 1965, it was taken for granted that the Farm Workers Association, a predominantly Mexican-American Association under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, would not cross the Filipino's picket lines onto the premises of the ten struck growers. But should they extend the strike to other growers in the Delano area? Chavez and other FWA leaders had calculated that they were still two years away from being prepared for a major strike. On the other hand they could not permit the appearance of scabbing another organization's strike. They decided to put the question to a vote of the FWA membership.

The emergency meeting called on September 16, the anniversary of the Mexican revolution, was emotionally charged. The largest hall in Delano was overflowing. When no one voiced any misgivings about extending the

strike to all Delano grape growers, Chavez took it upon himself to explain how great the sacrifices would be and how limited the FWA resources were. Nonetheless, the vote for La Huelga was unanimous.

THE STRIKE--AN ARENA FOR CLASS STRUGGLE

Philip's involvement with this strike and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in general proved to be his most consolidating experience in farm labor organizing. Through this struggle and his stand to take responsibility for advancing the movement, Philip's understanding of the working class was much deepened and provided the basis for a more conscious theoretical framework for labor organizing work.

It was already the third day of the strike when Philip set out to find out what was happening and extend whatever assistance he might. His union experience before September 11, 1965 was spotty and short-term. Unlike most of the farmworkers with whom he worked, Philip did not begin working in California agriculture until after World War II when he was drafted and sent to California in 1942.

After serving in the army for a year he was discharged and moved to Delano where a cousin of his lived. His first few years as a farm worker took him to Alaska, and his first experiences with farm labor organizing was in the asparagus cutters strike in Byron, California in 1948.

* "The workers who struck were all Filipinos. It was a big strike. People were working, I think, in Isleton, Byron, Tracy and other places there around Stockton. See it was a big area. Then we ask for help from others. There were some unions that helped us because they gave us some money, but they were not enough, because we were not getting any help

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, June 17, 1978.

from the union to pay our rooms. It was, I think, CIO help because they were the ones who were more liberal."

One of the main reasons for his renewed activism in the early 1950's was the graduation from law school of his brother in the Philippines. Philip had supported Martin throughout his professional training, and with his passing of the bar in 1949, Philip could turn his attention to other things. It was at this time that the National Farm Labor Union was brought to Delano.

* "My barber, he was kind of an educated person, a Filipino, he told me about this and said, 'Why don't you go?' So I went and it was a mass meeting. So he nominated me as temporary chairman and later I was voted in. Well, of course as temporary chairman, I raised the issue of whether we should have a union or not. So we put up the issue and found out that people did want a union. We were all Filipino except for one maybe, and there was a Black there. But we were practically all Filipino, and so I was nominated as our president and then I became president of the local.

"You see many of them had heard me speak before in the American Legion. So the people knew me that way. And I talk to people too. Not about politics or organizing or union or anything, I just talk to people.

"But I was not so serious with this union. It was not until the UFWOC that my understanding of unions and my political development really grew along with my experiences with the union.

"The civil rights movement had a lot of effects, too, not only on the farmworkers, but also on the people who support them and the people who are supporting are the kind of educated people. They constitute the leaders of the young generation.

"When the farmworkers, they see the television, they read the paper too, some of them anyway, they have seen

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, September 9, 1978.

that in the South the blacks have been succeeding and the the children have been watching and some of them went there and came back. So they say if it could be done there, it could be done here too. Over there it was just to go to the restaurant and get hamburgers, that was the freedom they were fighting for. Over here, you see, they are fighting for wages, so like that. Well, if they did it there, it could be done here too. So that's the parable.

"And then also the educated people have changed also. I'm not talking about the educated before because they are dead. I'm talking about the educated people now, the younger one. So maybe the fathers don't believe what the son is doing, but he will be out of the way very soon anyway. This guy's the one who takes over, what he does is what counts -- not the old guy.

"See the success of the civil rights was a kind of guiding star. Over there they used boycotts, they used civil disobedience and stuff like that. What they use there we use here like boycotts, civil disobedience. If there's an injunction and we want to put up a point to the public we go to jail. They use it there, it works, we use it here, it works too. All these things, it's a series of cause and effects. Your cause is here, it starts things going, moving and your effects will cause alot of things, causing other things. You know like a chain reaction.

"To be honest I wanted to be in business. I tried a cantina before. That failed and then I bought a little bit of property in Richgrove to start some kind of business. But then here comes the strike and then I got into the union. When the strike began I was not there. That's why on the third day I came around to look for it. I could not even find the office. They didn't have one.

I attended the first mass meeting and from that meeting until 12 years later I was active in the union. So my business plan was evaporated.

"When I made that decision, it was not for me; it was for the people who were working, the farm workers. I was a farmworker at that time too, but I was going out of the farm into business. So what happened was I got stuck there in the union. And then the situation kind of favored my ideals. The changes that have been going on in the institutions, the schools, the universities, the churches, colleges, and then the influence of the Christian movement in the South where whites were involved, student, church people gave us help. A lot of people had been coming. Then I kept on reading, I read a whole lot of histories, labor movements and so on like that, and my imagination was fired and my ideals reinforced, I could not leave.

"What I mean is I never saw students and church people coming to help the union before. When we were in Stockton in 1948 on strike, there were no church people there. See when you talk about ideals, it's not only one. They're interwoven. Like for instance your love of freedom. How can you get freedom by just talking? Or by politics or by economics? When it comes to the union you damn well know that you are kind of giving more freedom to the people because when they have more money, they can educate their children to learn something to get them up from that mess. What I thought was, if I help here now, then you see, the idea will travel. This will be the model. What we do here will be an invitation for other people to struggle and have their freedom. See? So when your ideals are realized, like for instance when you educate your children you will see that no family or race monopolizes intelligence. So that if you struggle and try to liberate the working people, then you will be surprised. Those people

whose parents could not even read and write, they will have doctors and lawyers to come along. And then they might not forget where they come from and so help others. Ideals are like a bunch of many things for the good of everybody, and it produces a lot of hope for others, kind of enlivens the others to struggle.

"See, when you first get involved you just don't go there and make commitments. It grows with you. When you get in there you make picket signs and then they say 'you go picket this, and picket that' and you go. You go leaflet, you go speak when some people come in and they want to know about the union. So you tell them what it's all about and ask for help. 'We need people in the offices, we need money, we need some people to help on the picket line.' You know, all those things is what it's all about. So right along, it opens up your mind and then of course the politics get in so you are stuck from the beginning. You will be surprised.

"The thing was, that when it comes to the organizing as I said, I presume that because it was a farmworker's union, all the farmworkers would come in. It's not true because people got problems. They got financial problems. The union cannot give them money, they cannot help everybody. They got bills. Some of them are paying their home, most of them are paying cars, their television, things like that. Up keep of the house, groceries and everything. And another factor was coercion. The farmers, when they find out that you are in the union, they fire you. You see? So there's alot of things. And then another thing is that people don't understand the issues. They don't understand. Then they look at the union as making some kind of trouble because it stopped the job. So there's alot of complicated factors involved. So I was mistaken in presuming that because it was farmworker's union, and it's all to

their advantages, that everybody would support it. It's not true. That's why organizing is hard.

"Then we had been picketing in the fields and stuff like that and it didn't work. Because the fields are so many square miles, and if you are picketing on a certain ranch, well there are so many entrances and you don't know where the hell they are working inside, you cannot see them. So we got to look around where the people are working and then you picket them and stuff like that. But picketing the fields never brings a contract, because there are so many people who will be coming in to take your place. And so they don't want to sign the contract. That's where the boycott comes in. The purpose of the boycott is to pressure the grower where he gets hurt, financially, to sign the contract. The only reason that he's going to sign will be because he will be losing money.

"Then when the product is international in character, then you got to have an international boycott. If you are only boycotting here, they sell it (grapes) in Canada, they sell in Europe, they sell it in Tokyo, they sell in South America. So therefore, you got to have some kind of network -- boycott throughout the world. And the central office is right here in Delano. But communications goes around from the office to there, all parts of the world. So that's one thing that also educated the workers because in the leaflets that we give here, we have research work. They want the extent of the property, they want the gross sales, and they want the net profit. So we find out the extent of the property, how many millions of acres or thousands of acres and so on like that, how much is the gross sales, where are the subsidiary corporations, if they are in the Philippines or South America or some in Europe. The message is that the workers here are being exploited like they are in other countries. So while we are boycotting them here, they are boycotting in Canada, they are

boycotting South America, Central America and so on. In that way they can't get away.

"There was also a lesson that we learned from past Filipino strikes. They knew that when we went out on strike before, the Mexicans and some other workers might scab, so then the Filipino side thought that they should approach the Mexican workers to help so they will not be scabbing. So somebody went to talk to Ceasar Chavez, I think maybe Al Green. Then Ceasar's organization approved the idea but it created some kind of dissention and some of them didn't like to be with the Filipinos and some preferred to unite with us. Now on our side there was also dissention. Some Filipinos didn't like the Mexicans either, and their reason was that there are alot of them and they say 'When they get in control, then they're going to kick out the Filipinos.' So they got different reasons. Anyway most of us left in the union we favored working together.

"I think they have one lesson which is very important: if you don't get together, you cannot accomplish anything worthwhile. And also there are things that you cannot accomplish individually, but when it comes to big things, you cannot make it yourself without the others. Therefore that's collective effort. That means organization, that means helping one another. That's the trend today. You know, collectives. You can also illustrate that by anything that you see or anything that you experience here. It's the product of collectives. But Filipinos don't understand.

"Then when it comes to democracy in the union, it's not exactly what they say in public. Because Ceasar always says 'We are building a democratic union ...' but in practice it's kind of different. Of course we are allowed to talk there, but there is always one dominating

personality like Ceasar.

"See you got to have a clear picture. It's not a full grown union like the Auto Workers Union, or the Steel Workers' Union or the Coal Miner's Union. When you are still organizing or are in the process of organizing like right now, you don't have the control of the workers. Or if you have a meeting, some will come, some won't. You got no control. So that's why your democracy's not working. And then when something goes wrong, everybody there blames you.

Like the course of the Alaska cannery workers, Philip's dissatisfaction with the UFW is rooted in the conservatism that the union began to display in the later years of its development, and its growing isolation from the concerns of the workers. In particular, the union's position on undocumented workers, the red-baiting of people labelled as subversives and finally its recognition of the fascist dictatorship in the Philippines were all manifestations of the union's conservative trend.

* "But you see, the union had committed mistakes in policy not only one mistake, but it had committed different big mistakes that involves general principles, that affect the amount of support we're getting from students and even the church people. Don't forget the people who support the union did not come to get riches; they came to give their services, give their money too. So if you violate the principles that they believe in, you lose their support, right? Now I have said before that according to my observation I think that the policy of the union to be against undocumented workers affected the support for the union. Because there is a lot of Mexicans who turned against the union because of that one issue. Ceasar should know better. Because he did not understand that the interest of the grower is being

* Personal Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, September 9, 1978.

served by cheap labor means. That's why they make a lot of profits. Big business is with big government whether it is the state or the federal. That's why they don't want to plug up the border because they want the undocumented workers to come in. And Ceasar should understand that he cannot stop the people coming in because the government doesn't want to. So you might as well say they are our fellow workers; they are our brothers and sisters and we should educate them. We should protect them. Then you get all their support. You know? But he took the opposite way so they don't like what he did. So he don't get the support of the Mexican.

"Well, it was kind of disappointing, but what can you do? You can only do so much. Why wouldn't you turn around the other so you get more support to fight the government and fight the growers? You cannot stop it anyway. And then another one is the red-baiting. The people who went over there to come and help the union, they're not all communists, they're not all reds, they're not all subversives, but he labelled them that way. He fired and a lot of them quit. Now we can't get no help. You see? With this change of tactic, he felt that the employers, the growers would take his side then it will be easier to get the contracts because he cleaned the organization of communists. But it's not true, because the profit is more attractive to the grower than the union. Because if the union will be stronger the grower will not get alot of his profit, right? And by ourselves we don't have a good chance to get strong.

"And then he went to the Philippines, and what happened? He showed alot of disrespect for the Filipinos fighting for their freedom, their people, and not only the Filipinos, all the people fighting for liberation don't like Ceasar going over there. So he loses his support right there again. And the people he depended upon,

like the employers, they don't want to help Ceasar, they want to fight him. So he lost his support. How the hell can he boycott now?

"If you call for a boycott you need alot of people, millions of people. You've got to maintain people in the cities, not only one city, but all the big cities in the United States, in Europe, and some other places. Who's gonna help you now? Hell, he's losing the support of all the progressives who had been helping before. They closed the clinic, they closed the Huelga School, you know, the place is almost deserted. These used to be operated by a lot of volunteer people that came over and they were just doing it for minimal pay.

"Okay, now to me, I try to make the distinction between leadership and movement. This union is good. It benefits the worker and you need it. Everybody needs it whether you are a professional or just a common worker, you need an organization whose fundamental principal is collectives. Therefore, the only thing that you got to do is kind of reorganize people.

"I was there in the union for twelve years and I never left, until last August. That's the time I begin to analyze things. Of course, I was trying to analyze before, but I lacked experiences. So when I got into the union I learned that my assumptions before were wrong. Because as I said, I thought that everybody would support the union because it's good for the farmworkers. But it's not true. And the reason is because they're other factors involved, like his ignorance of the issues because he does not have the education and then he's afraid of the grower or his boss.

"And when I went out from the union because I have some differences with the leadership, it is not because I hate them personally. I can say thanks to Ceasar for having improved the working conditions, wages, and benefits of the

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"And when I went out from the union because I have some differences with the leadership, it is not because I hate them personally. I can say thanks to Ceasar for having improved the working conditions, wages, and benefits of the

farmworkers, because he is our leader and I respect him for that. But I didn't agree with what they are doing because of the principles I have been fighting for. I want to be consistent and I want to be logical.

"The farmworkers movement started a long, long time ago. It involves everybody. The blacks were in it, the whites were in it, the Asians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos were in it, the Indians were in it, the Mexicans were in it. Now to me, it's a struggle for human liberation because we represent millions and millions of people. More than whites when you count the number. Then the blacks we also represent the darker skins. Like for instance, a lot of blacks in Africa are also fighting for liberation while the blacks here, they're not doing their job here at all. To me it affects humanity in general, so that's why I'm in it and for it.

"When you look at the history of farm workers, every time the farmworkers union got up. Then it was suppressed and then they got up again and suppressed again. But every time they learn something. Everytime they learn something to improve their position. So in 1965, when we were on strike, we were merely picking up where they left off. Therefore, it was not all our achievement, but we also had inherited some other things that have been done during the past. Like our freedom to speak, our freedom to talk to the workers, our freedom to have meetings where we don't get to the firing squad and get shot. While before they get shot, some of them got killed. And then of course communication, education, transportation and everything has something to do with it. And also the changes of the institutions like the colleges and universities and high schools and so on like that. And then the churches have changes also. They are all in the process of change, and so therefore as I told you about the other movements that we were

involved in, like those through religious, southern Christian movements, they have something to do with the success of our organization because a lot of people have been involved in it. The students were involved and they learned the processes of educating the masses and how to raise money for the cause, the speaking in groups in churches, in the schools and so on like that. Well, they use it here and then we learn it from them. And naturally, the different leaders before, they made big contributions, too. In our time Ceasar as a leader got good credit for what has been done for the last 12 years. But it does not mean he does not make any mistakes. Well, there will be the time when his effectiveness will get lost, but other leaders will come up. For instance, here you have the farmworkers. Well, they have something going on in Texas and then there are some also ... some kind of farmworkers movements going on right there in the East, around New Jersey, and Virginia, so it's all over. Therefore, when the farmworkers movement loses its effectiveness here, it's a force, just like a flood of water. If it's blocked by a mountain, it goes somewhere else. So that's the way it goes. Because the conditions the necessities of the conditions require leadership and the leader will come up. Because the leader is a product of the circumstances. It has a great impact. Again because as I said before, the struggle of the farmworkers movement is a part of the whole struggle, see? And the general principles of the struggles are the same, they are fighting for freedom. When your rights are established, then your material benefits will follow. Don't worry about benefits, they will come. But first of all you got to have those rights."

SUMMATION

The majority of Filipinos who immigrated to the U.S. during the 1920's and 1930's were peasants from the provinces of the Philippines. However, there were also immigrants from the Philippine petty bourgeoisie. But whatever class they had come from in the Philippines, once they arrived in the U.S., both essentially became part of the working class. Their experiences of limited job opportunity, no advancement, low wages and poor living and working conditions were that of other workers in the U.S. but was compounded by the fact that they constituted a racial minority and thus were also subjected to racial attacks.

The level of organizing among Filipinos during the 1930's is a good indication of the class consciousness which developed within the Filipino community of the first wave. Approximately 10 years after the initial arrival of large numbers of Filipinos, active organizing among themselves began and in most cases was linked with efforts of other workers as they recognized the need to build a "united front" to win their demands for better conditions.

The experiences of these three men represent that sector of Filipino immigrants with aspirations for a college education and professional training. When confronted with sure failure under the oppressive yoke of racism and an economy in crisis, their response which was expressed in unionism was a sign of the proletarianization that had been set in motion since their arrival.

The proletarianization spoken of here is an inherent by-product of a class society. In their cases this process took place in the arena of farm labor as they attempted to resolve the contradiction between their

aspirations for petty bourgeois goals and the abuses inflicted on them by a society whose only concern for them was that they remain available as a source of cheap labor. Through the proletarianization experience their petty bourgeois aspirations were transformed and in its place was taken up the struggle for decent working conditons for the farm laborer.

To respond to their oppression by unionizing was in and of itself an indication of their deepening identification with the working class. Unionizing over spontaneous organizing represented a more consolidated understanding of the relationship of the worker to the bourgeoisie, in that it called for a conscious, long-term commitment to struggle on behalf of the worker.

Their efforts to maintain the militant character of the union and the accountability of union leadership to the rank and file was indicative of yet a deeper refinement of their working class consciousness. Not satisfied with merely a formation united on principal, they became active agents within the union to agitate the leadership and membership both to combat conservatism within the union and regain the old militance and purpose.

Philip's experience in particular represented a deeper test of class consciousness. In grappling with the contradictions of a more international form of capitalism and the contradictions of multi-ethnic union organizing he has arrived at a sharper understanding of the need for and existence of working class solidarity.

CHAPTER IV
OVERALL PERSPECTIVE

The gap between the aspirations of these men and objective reality was without doubt basis for sharp struggle both internally to the individual and with the external conditions. Economically, as was depicted earlier in this paper, the Filipino arrived in the midst of one of America's worst depressions. Educational opportunities were out of the question without financial resources, and the possibility of amassing financial reserves under such stringent conditions was slim. Within the first five years, it was already apparent that their aspirations would never be realized, but they continued to harbor the hope that a day might still come when they would get the opportunity for education and training.

While the deteriorating economy was a major barrier to their fulfilled expectations, it was its partnership with racism that perpetuated the disparity between classes and gave rise to the movements among workers and minorities to unionize. The stories of non-white immigrants confirm the racist character of their experiences in America and consequently its proletarianizing effects. Philip's experiences for instance:

"Then here comes the Filipino. And when they (white Americans) looked at them they see they were Asians. So even though they have not done anything yet, they are hated because it is a reflection of their hatred to the Asians -- to the Japanese and Chinese. So it was the Filipino who got the most of it. When the Filipino got to the U.S. they found out that they are not wanted. They are only wanted for their service, their labor. I'll give you an example. Right here where we worked, the white didn't know what to do and you got to teach him. And very soon when they

promote him, he is your boss. Now how come you are not the boss? You have been teaching the guy, now he's in charge of you. See? So your equal opportunity is not there. You know that dam well. What's the reason? Because you're not white. That's the only reason."

By the time Filipinos arrived in the U.S., they are only the next victims of an already well-established and pervasive racial hatred, one that has effectively served the interest of capitalist development for already 100 years. Racism is a tool of capitalism and it is this historic bond of racism to this particular mode of production that has held the working class at bay. A tool that tends to equalize the experiences of all non-whites, serving also to confine them to the status of proletarian.

Racism is an ideology, not a scientific theory. It is an out-growth of social structure. Once an ideology is formed it is capable of playing at least a semi-independent role in subsequent social developments. It developed historically among whites as a social idea to "explain" the inferior status (and exploitation) of non-whites. Thus, we are dealing with a set of social ideas that reflect already existing social practice.⁷⁸

What appears to be natural force, independent of the economic base, and "inherent" in all men is actually a historically developed system of ideas based directly on the labor needs of the developing capitalist mode of production. The use of racial categories in the social practice of race relations make up what we witness as the phenomenon of racism. The evolution of racial categories in turn evolved out of a historical process or social practice which produced racial classifications to rationalize the enslavement of blacks and later the exploitation of other non-whites.

Racism in the U.S. evolved more from internal contradictions rather than being borrowed from the English, Spanish, or Dutch colonies. It developed as the plantation system matured and the need for wage-labor came into contradiction with the shortage of wage-laborers, especially in Virginia which at that time was "perhaps the most developed colony, socio-economically and politically speaking of the continental colonies ..."⁷⁹ The abundance of cheap, already available land coupled with the population scarcity made it difficult to force free men to work for wages when they might instead become independent free farmers in their own right. A system of unfree labor was thus required to ensure a stable, cheap labor force.⁸⁰ The enslavement of blacks became a "solution" to the increasing labor demand of the colonies. The continued development of the plantation system rested on the subjugation of generations of blacks into slavery.

In order to implement this the evolution of racial categories was an obvious necessity. The economics of slavery could not have existed over an extended period as just a shrewd market-oriented operation. Elaboration of a whole culture of control -- with political, social and ideological formulations -- was necessary to hold dominance over the black slaves and to keep the non-slave holding whites in line.⁸¹ The culture of control became largely structured around a color-oriented racialism. The development of a rationale, regarding the degradation of all blacks and the formation of conforming institutional practices were necessary to maintain a social order based on enslavement of some blacks. In the U.S. racism became subjugation based on blackness rather than servitude alone.⁸²

Through the creation of racial categories, the then already wide-

spread ideas of white superiority and black inferiority attained social validity. Racial slavery then became the expected condition of blacks. This ideology became integrated into the lives, institutions and world view of Americans to the point where it appeared to have a life of its own. It merged into both the political apparatus and the social forms of hegemony by which white class rule was sustained. Two hundred years later these categories are still used.

The recruitment of other groups of Third World people was made possible after the Civil War with the advent of imperialism which opened up whole new areas of the world to recruitment of a domestic colonial work force that, like the blacks, could be stigmatized and subordinated on the basis of racial distinction. To accommodate this trend the ideology of racism was broadened to encompass other Third World people drawn into the reserve labor pool. In the post-Civil War period Chinese contract labor was proving the value of a semi-enslaved but ostensibly "free" labor force. The racist ideology that had evolved around slavery was finding new expression in the Chinese question. The Chinese exclusion movement marked the identification of Blacks with orientals, marking a fifty-five year evolution of an ideology that grouped orientals with the already long-established negative connotations of Blacks as represented in a statement by Samuel Gompers: "But the Caucasians are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by Negroes, Chinese, Japs or any other ..." in this statement expressing the concept that Asians are excluded from the ranks of Caucasians and lumped in with Blacks.⁸³ This represented a refinement of the racist ideology of discrimination based on blackness to one of discrimination based on nationality. This concept

was even more dangerous in that it could be applied to any Third World group.

Since integration into the economy for any group of people was through wage-labor, labor became the arena where blacks and each subsequent non-white group confronted racism in its most vicious form. But this was also the arena where racism was challenged most vigorously by blacks and each non-white group that found itself victimized by American racism. Racial oppression while objectively victimizing a people at the same time creates the conditions for its own demise as its victims begin to organize their resistance into a force that can challenge racist institutions. Blacks in particular have a long history of resistance to racism through the development of their own press, organizations, caucases and unions. In this tradition many ethnic minorities have been both victim and challenger of the racism of American labor. Filipinos are one more example.

Those who sought to fight the racist and oppressive character of farm labor through unionization represented the more conscious elements of the working class. In the cases studied here, their working class consciousness, while it did take the form of unionization, developed unevenly as a result of the heavy influences of their petty bourgeois mentality and the limitations already existing in the working class consciousness of the American working class overall.

While on the one hand it was their petty bourgeois idealism that drew them into the struggle for their rights, it was the same petty bourgeois outlook that limited their development after their initial transformation. At the start their participation took more the form of protest against violated rights entitled to every person -- remnants of a christian

ethic that began as respect and dignity due to all individuals. This seemed to be the framework by which they assessed their own situation and the conditions of other workers. They saw themselves as keeper of a social morality and guardian of social justice in an economic system that had little of either. The miserable conditions and blatant social injustice was an affront to their sense of human dignity and a call to assert what they knew to be basic rights to decent wages and working conditions. Their petty bourgeois upbringing provided them with confidence in their beliefs as a sense of responsibility for making right those things they saw as unjust. This was manifested in the activist role that each took -- Leo as elected official of the cannery union; Al as delegate for the union or "people's lawyer" (as he prefers to call it); and Philip as organizer, propagandist, teacher, philosopher.

For all three their initial participation represented an expression of liberal conscience, not grounded in any particular discipline or theoretical framework. The unevenness became sharper as the task of maintaining a strong union intensified. In this context Philip adopted a more defined theoretical framework for his ideas while Al and Leo did not.

For Al and Leo their consciousness remained at the level of unionization without a deeper analysis. The lessons they have drawn through their organizing experiences tend to remain at the level of the general good of unionism as a watchdog for the worker's interest. Digressions from this perspective within the union are the responsibility of individuals -- leadership in particular. Their analysis does not make the links with the broader economic structure or the balance of forces operating within the society.

Their relative isolation from active political work since they resigned from active union work in the early 1950's tended to sever their ties with the more progressive elements of the working class. Their understandings remain at the level of wage and benefit reforms aimed at reaching parity with workers in other organized industries, rather than the advocacy of structural changes that go beyond the immediate needs of a particular sector of the working class.

Philip's theoretical framework has evolved into one with a socialist orientation. He too left the union as his frustrations with its conservatism grew, but he continued to study the farmworker situation, interacting enthusiastically with the ideas of the more progressive and revolutionary elements of the civil rights movement.

"... since I left the union, that's when I began to really analyze things ... You see the trend is really socialism. There will still be some kind of independent businesses, but I think the United States will nationalize the big industries someday, like the steel industry, and some other big industries. But I see that the American people are not yet pinched. It will take a long time. The only reason I talk like that is that I don't want people to give it up -- to keep fighting. Because when the time comes, the people will join you."

Philip's experiences being much broader -- having done lobbying work, international support work, propaganda work, student work and a leading member in policy development of the union -- has demanded a more strategic analysis of the role of labor organizing.

"I began to be more serious and try to understand how the worker survives because he got nothing and the employer got everything. He got the property, he got the business,

he got the machineries, he got the government for his friend, and the worker got nothing. All he got is just his vote and his empty hands -- his labor power, that's all. You see that's why your organization's important."

While this represents a relatively deeper analysis and advancement over the liberal conscience, it is not without its own petty bourgeois influences. He can trace the source of the abuses of society to capitalism and project the inevitability of socialism, but the process by which this will happen is evolutionary in character through the upward mobility of minorities into positions where they can make those changes that will bring about the eventual socialization of services and industries.

"And you people who are educated, you got to help us and build the organization so you have political power behind you because you will be discriminated. If you back up this organization that is a grass roots organization, then you have a better chance of educating others in order that the children in the next generation has doctors, lawyers, engineers and they got everybody. They need somebody who understands the relationship of power. They need intellectuals so you got to be educated. And as lawyers, engineers, and all those things, protect these people and guide them and so on like that."

While these men would represent the relatively more conscious elements of the working class, much of their petty bourgeois outlook continues to block a more complete transformation to a working class ideology. This is a reoccurring phenomenon in the U.S. working class. Despite the crisis and revolutionary upsurges that shook the U.S. in the 1930's and more recently the activism of the 1960's the vast majority of the working class

have not arrived at a more strategic analysis of the roots of their oppression.

Although the experiences of these three organizers were oppressive, they were also confronted with those particularities of the U.S. working class that have historically acted as barriers to the thorough development of a working class consciousness.

The factor which has most successfully obscured the class antagonism of the American working class is the fragmentation of workers along many artificial lines that obscure their commonality and act as a barrier to their unity. The American ruling class has been able to dilute the potential for unity, by artfully stratifying workers into the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Social stratification, in that varying weights and prestige are given to different occupations, exists to further block a sense of unity.

The working class of the U.S., far from being a homogeneous group of equally unskilled and impoverished people, is in fact, a stratum differentiated by numerous subtle and not-so-subtle distinctions. What is peculiar about the U.S. working class is the division in production between skilled and unskilled, mental and physical work, men and women, blacks and whites, and various ethnic groups which all play a significant role in the formation of social consciousness. These differences hide the fact that all who work for a wage, the majority of those who are salaried employees of corporations and government, are powerless to determine the basic decisions that affect both their working lives and their private lives.⁸⁴

It appears further that these three groups differ not only in their

level of skill, but also in the social status attributed to them. Different weights are given to different occupations although no worker has ownership or controls the object of their labor or its uses. What this does to a worker's consciousness is to separate him from his fellow workers, making identification of the commonality of their plight much more obscure. The formation of an aristocracy of labor in the midst of diminishing artisan skills is one of the critical features of the history of American workers. Skilled labor becomes more important as an ideological concept that is warranted by its actual role in production. With newer technologies the differences between "unskilled", "semi'skilled", and "skilled" workers are even less clear and come to be more conceptual or labelling categories that are increasingly less rooted within production itself.

These characteristics are generally the condition of the industrial working class, yet the dynamics of stratification and resulting fragmentation of workers acts to maintain a division among workers in agriculture as well. This stratification is evident in that such jobs as truck drivers or machine operators or foremen are more prestigous when contrasted to field hands, or stoop labor. Fragmentation in agriculture is furthered by the segregation of crews from each other based on race lines. Such divisions make organizing in the agricultural industry equally, if not more difficult.

Working class consciousness, while it is a response to the concrete abuses of racism and economic deprivation, cannot by itself lead to revolutionary solutions, especially in light of the particularities of work-

ing class stratification in the U.S. Al and Leo, for example, did become workers with a strong identification with the oppression of the working class, but their consciousness did not continue to develop after their initial proletarianization. Their isolation from the progressive movement and revolutionary ideas after they left active union work did not provide favorable conditions for their continued development as opposed to Philip who consciously sought the ideas of the left. Armed with some sense of revolutionary theory, Philip has been able to deepen his analysis of the situation of workers. As was the general case of the labor movement of the 1930's and 1960's, consistent left influence was limited in fomenting the working class movement. What results is an imperfect working class consciousness, one that is not rooted in a concrete understanding of the nature of class society in a capitalist economy.

A P P E N D I X

Table - Agricultural Strikes in California involving Filipinos from 1928 - 1940

Date	Crop	Place	No., Union/Other Group Involved	Prevailing Wage	Demands
Feb. 1928	Asparagus	Stockton			-protected reduced wages
April 1928	Lettuce	Imperial Valley	white workers		-better living conditions -protected reduced wages
Jan. 30, 1928		Imperial Valley	5,000; TIUL, predominantly Mexican, with Filipino, Hindu, Japanese, Chinese	\$1.25-\$1.50 per day	-25¢ increase in wages -no piece rates -no contract system -recognition of workers' "job committees" -rehiring of strike participant -union members without discrimination
April 1930	cantaloupe	Imperial Valley			-restoration of wage cut from 75¢ to 40¢-50¢ -improved housing -free medical services -abolition of the \$4 rental for housing
May 1932	peas	Half-Moon Bay	C&AWIU; Mexican	75¢	
Nov. 1952	fruit	Solano Co.	300-400 C&AWIU; Mexican, Japanese		-\$2.50 per day -8-hour day -time and a half overtime -free transportation & equipment -union recognition -cessation of eviction -rehiring without discrimination on grounds of race, color or union membership
April 1953	peas	Alameda & Santa Clara Counties	2,000; C&AWIU Mexican, Puerto Ricans, whites	15¢/hamper	-higher wages 30¢ per hamper ic per pound 35¢ per hour

Source: Stuart Jaimson, "Labor Unionism In American Agriculture," U.S. Labor Statistics Bureau, Bulletin #825-#836, 1945

Date	Crop	Place	Groups Involved	Wage	Demands
June 1933	Berries plus some celery & onions	El Monte, Los Angeles County	7,000; few Filipinos C&AWIU, Mexicans	15¢-20¢/hr.	-wage increase to 25¢/hour
Aug. 1933	lettuce	Monterey Co. Salinas & Watsonville	C&AWIU		-increase wages
Aug. 1933	Grape	Kern Co.	C&AWIU		-increase wages
Aug. 1933	Sugar beet	Oxnard, Ventura Co.	1,000-2,000; Mexican Filipino Protective Union	C&AWIU;	-35¢ per hour -30-50% increase in wage rates -8-hour day -weekly pay days -free transportation to and from work -union recognition -employment without discrimination to race or union affiliation -hiring by union shop -abolition of labor contractors
Feb. 1934	peas	Calipatria, Imperial Valley	10,000; Mexican, Rican	20¢/hr.	-2¢ per pound -recognize C&AWIU -clean water on the job -sanitary conditions -scales for every 150 workers -release of all arrested strikers
Jan. 1934	Spinach	San Mateo County	C&AWIU		-increase wages
Feb. 1934	Brussel-Sprouts	Pescadero, San Mateo County	C&AWIU	20¢/hr	-union recognition -wage increase to 25¢/hour
March 1934	Asparagus	Sacramento County	7,000; C&AWIU		-increase in wage
April 1934	Strawberry	Florin Sacramento County	500-800; C&AWIU; Mexican	20¢/hr	-raise wages to 25¢ -union recognition

Date	Crop	Place	No., Union/Other Groups Involved	Prevailing Wage	Demands
June 1934	Apricot	Contra Costa County	1,000; C&AWIU; Mexican	20¢/hour 8¢/box	-35¢ per hour -piece rate of 15¢/box -8-hour work day -union recognition
Summer 1934	Lettuce	Salinas, Santa Maria Valley	Filipino Labor Union, INC.	30¢/hour; trimmers 40¢-50¢/hour	-increase wage to 40¢ per hour -improved working conditions -trimmers: 60¢ per hour -8-hour work day -time and a half overtime, Sundays and holidays
Nov. 1934		Guadalupe	5,000 Filipino Labor Union Inc.; Mexican, whites		-increase wages to 30¢/hour
Jan. 1935	peas	San Luis Obispo	100; Filipino Labor Union, Inc.		
Feb. 1935	vegetable	Orange Co.	CUCOM; whites		
Nov. 1935	Orange	Santa Ana	400; CUCOM; Filipino Labor Union; America Industrial Workers Union (Mexican, white)		
Feb. 1936		San Diego	Co. Federation of Agricultural Workers of America; Mexican		-union recognition -60% union preference -minimum wage of 30¢ per hour
April 1936	Celery	Los Angeles Co; Venice El Monte, Torrance, Harbor City, Lovita, Palos Verdes, Norwalk, Carmen Carmenita, Bellflower	2,600; CUCOM, Filipino Farm Labor Union; Japanese Labor Union		-90% workers should be FAWOA -Union people paid minimum of 50¢ per hour -celery workers 40¢ per hour -9-hour work day -time and a half for Sundays, holidays

Date	Crop	Place	No., Union/Others Groups Involved	Prevailing Wage	Demands
June 1936	citrus	Orange Co.	2,500-3,000; CUCOM Mexican, Japanese,	5½/box 22¢/hour	-increase wage to 27½¢/hour -free transportation instead of charging 1-20¢ to and from groves -union recognition
Sept. 1936	artichoke brussel- sprouts	Santa Cruz Co.	175-200; Filipino Labor Union, Inc.		-increase wage to 35¢/hour
Nov. 1936	celery	Stockton Sacramento	Agricultural Workers Union #20221 Agricultural Workers Union #20241		-increase wage of 10¢ more per hour -union recognition -hiring hall for local farm worke
Early 1937	fruit & veg.	San Luis Obispo Co. Oceana, Pismo Beach, Arroyo Grande	200; Filipino Labor Union		-35¢ per hour -no discrimination because of union affiliation -10-hour day with time and a half Sundays & holidays -wages paid every 15 days -recognize union as collective bargaining agent -agreement good for one year
early 1937	spinach	Milpitas	40		
April 1937	Peas	San Luis Obispo Co.	1,000; Filipino Labor Union		
Dec. 1937	Veg.	Santa Maria Valley	UCAPAWA #69, #71, #72 3,000; Mexican & Filipino		-increase in wages
April 1939	Asparagus	San Joaquin Co.; Sacram- ento; Contra Costa & Yolo Counties	4,000-5,000; FALA		-restoration of 1938 wage scale - revised, uniform, model contract mutually drawn and agreed upon by employers & em- ployees bargaining collectively through their own representative

Date	Crop	Place	No., Union/Other Groups Involved	Prevailing Wage	Demands
Sept. 1939	peas/ tomato	Sacramento	Filipino Labor Assoc. 1,500	25¢-27½¢/hour	-increase wage to 35¢/hour
Sept. 1939	peas/ tomato	Concord	250; FALA	30¢/hour	-increase wage to a minimum of 5¢/hour more
Oct. 1939	brussel-sprouts	Pescadero, San Mateo Co.	363-Filipino 20-Mexican FALA	30¢/hour	-increase wage to a minimum of 5¢/hour more
mid-Dec. 1939	brussel sprouts	Pescadero	500; FALA & supported by UCAPAWA Local 20 (Stockton)	30¢/hour	-3¢/hour minimum increase -free housing -employers reemploy all strikers without discrimination for union affiliation
Nov. 1939	Celery	Pescadero, Terminus, Holt, Orwood, others	2,000; FALA, UCAPAWA Local 20	25c/hour	-union recognition -minimum wage of 30¢/hour -10-hour work day and time and a half overtime -reinstatement of all strikers without discrimination -seniority rights for workers -improved housing conditions with no charge for rent, fuel, light
Fall 1939	garlic planting	Hollister	500; Filipino Agri. Workers Union	50c/hour	-increase in wage to a minimum of 5c/hour more
1940	celery	Delta Region near Terminus	FALA		

Abbreviations: TUUL: Trade Union Unity League
CGAWIU: Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union
CUCOM: Confederacion de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos del Estado de California
UCAPAWA: United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America
FALA: Filipino Agricultural Labor Association

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