Guide to the San Joaquin Valley Farm Labor Collection, 1947-1974

Sanoian Special Collections Library

Henry Madden Library
Fresno, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: San Joaquin Valley Farm Labor Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1947-1974
Extent: 2 linear feet
Photographs: In box 1.
Repository: Henry Madden Library (California State University, Fresno).
Sanoian Special Collections Library.
Fresno, California
Language: English.

Acquisition
The collection was donated by Winthrop B. Yinger in 1970.

Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], San Joaquin Valley Farm Labor Collection, Sanoian Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

Background
Agricultural production found a prosperous home in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. The valley's fertile soil and climate made it a million-dollar industry. Of vital importance was also the cheap labor provided by incoming immigrants who were willing to work for low wages. Although immigrants of every ethnicity were working in the fields in the 1960s, the majority were Filipinos and people of Mexican descent. In 1965 a strike by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) led by Larry Itliong was joined by the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) led by Cesar Chavez. This began the fight for justice for the farm worker through agricultural unionism.

Before this joint strike Chavez had already begun his work to organize farm workers. In 1962 he created the NFWA, which held its first organizing convention in Fresno, California. At the convention Cesar Chavez was voted president and the Aztec thunderbird became the official symbol of the organization and continued as such throughout the organization's various
The shouts of “huelga,” the Mexican word for strike, began in the small community of Delano, California. The demands of the NFWA and AWOC were for higher wages and better living conditions. At the time Chavez had been approved for a $276,887 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEC) “for adult education project among migrant workers” (Box 2, Office of Economic Opportunity (OEC) War on Poverty grant, telegrams, 1965). He asked that the grant be withheld temporarily because he was in the middle of a strike. An uproar over the decision of the OEC to grant Chavez the money began in the small community. A flood of letters and telegrams was sent to Congressman Harlen Hagen, who was flown in from Washington to Delano for the sole purpose of breaking the strike. The NFWA and AWOC merged in 1966 to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (UFWOC, AFL-CIO). From a pilgrimage to Sacramento in 1966 through a nationwide boycott in 1968, the UFWOC was successful in bringing its cause to the attention of the nation.

The union brought down the first big powerhouses of the agricultural world when Schenley Farms and the DiGiorgio Corporation signed contracts with the NFWA/UFWOC, AFL-CIO. Guimarra and Ernest & Julio Gallo signed with the union after a hard-fought battle. The union had 180 contracts by 1973. The contracts called for strict controls on pesticides, a medical plan and the hiring hall. The hiring hall clause stipulated that growers hire laborers according to the union’s seniority list and that they be paid at least the minimum wage even during slow periods. The hiring hall was debated numerous times between the union and growers. The dispute over the hiring hall precluded any chance of renewing the contracts. By 1973, when the contracts were up for renewal, the union lost all but twelve of the 180 contracts to the Teamsters (Box 3, Strike and boycott against grapes, Newspaper clippings, 1973). Despite the blow, Cesar Chavez did begin to rebuild the union which changed its name to its now present name, the National Farm Workers (NFW), in 1972.

Chavez was a man whose powerful speeches drew hundreds of thousands to join “la causa” for equality not only in the San Joaquin Valley but around the world. He was held as the modern Zapata. He was bold and aggressive in tackling the issues of pesticides and unsanitary conditions faced by farm workers.

Scope and Content
The San Joaquin Valley Farm Labor collection measures 2 linear feet and dates from 1947 to 1971. The collection is arranged in five series: Yinger bibliography; Office of Economic Opportunity (OEC) War on Poverty; Chavez, Cesar; Strike and boycott against grapes.

The Yinger bibliography (1970) covers information on the history of the Delano grape strike, the UFWA and related organizations that were integral to the farm labor movement from 1959 to 1970. Most of the material listed in the bibliography is available in this series. The items are arranged in the exact order in which they appear in the bibliography. The bibliography was created by Winthrop Yinger, donor of the collection. Material that is not in the collection is noted with an asterisk in the bibliography.

The Farm labor in California series (1947-1974) contains articles, reports and pamphlets. Topics range from health conditions of migrant farm workers to wages, and laws concerning farm workers. The annual reports presented to the National Share Croppers Fund give a brief outline of the farm workers’ conditions for each year.

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEC) War on Poverty grant (1964-1966) was initiated to fight the nation’s war on poverty. The OEC found itself in the public eye when it granted Cesar Chavez, leader of the NFWA, a $276,887 anti-poverty grant. United States Representative Harlen Hagen’s correspondence as well as that of Senator Thomas H. Kuchel are included. Much of the correspondence is with the general public who was outraged that the OEC had granted the funds to Chavez, who had become the enemy of the small agricultural community of Delano because of the strike.

The Cesar Chavez series (1965-1973) includes a chronology of his life (1927-1970) as well as a variety of interviews with him. However, the bulk of the material on Chavez is in the Yinger bibliography series which covers Chavez’s struggle to organize the union and his dedication to obtaining his goals through non-violent means.

When President Lyndon Johnson announced in 1966 that Cesar Chavez was being considered for a position on a civil rights commission for Mexican-Americans, Representative Hagen was besieged with telegrams from the Kern County Board of Supervisors and the growers in Delano. The possible appointment of Chavez to a federal position (1966) generated an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of Chavez as well as his associates. The report is included in this series.

The Strike and boycott against grapes in 1966 (1960-1974) sparked a division through the town of Delano. The clergy of Delano were drawn into the controversy. While some chose to remain silent, others joined the picketing farm workers. Newspaper clippings covering the church’s position, as well as a pamphlet entitled Clergy Views on the Strike, give brief overviews of their role in the grape strike.

Two highly publicized contracts signed with the NFWA were with Schenley Farms and the DiGiorgio Corporation. Schenley Farms was the first to sign a contract which set up provisions to protect the safety and health of the workers. Under the
contract Schenley Farms was to provide protective garments to guard workers against pesticides and any other material as the need arose. The union also established a hiring hall which recruited and furnished the employees needed by an employer. The hourly rate for each job classification is also in the contract. The collection also contains several documents concerning the DiGiorgio contract as well as the actual contract. Additional information is in the Yinger bibliography.

The Newsletters subseries includes *El Malcriado (The Misfit)*, the official publication of the NFWA. All of the newsletters in the series cover the strike in Delano.

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**Yinger bibliography, 1970**

Additional Note

(see bibliography for complete listings under each topic)

**Box Box 1**

**Agribusiness**

*The Arts*

Agricultural Workers Freedom to Work Association (AWFWA)

California Migrant Ministry (CMM)

Cesar Estrada Chavez (see also box 3, Chavez, Cesar)

UFWOC Contracts With Growers

Church Documents

*Farm Labor*

Marches, Pilgrimages

National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor

National Sharecroppers fund

National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) History

United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), AFL-CIO

Miscellaneous Sources & Documents

Farm labor in California

**Box Box 1**

**Agriculture (1 folder)**

*Agribusiness and its Workers, 1963*

*Ethical Issues in Commercial Agriculture, 1970*

*Paradoxes of Agricultural Unionism in California, 1974*

Principal agriculture areas, 1960

*Productivity of Labor in Agricultural Production, 1967*

**Articles**

General, 1958-1968

California migrants, 1949

Concerning wages, 1960, 1968

DiGiorgio Corporation and Schenley Farms, 1966

Health, 1959-1963

Organized, 1960-1965

**Bracero program**

The bracero in California agriculture pamphlet, 1966

Newspaper clippings, 1955-1963

**Box Box 2**

**Reports (4 folders)**

*Folder 1*

Annual farm labor reports, 1962, 1964, 1966

*Folder 2*

California farm labor problems report of the Senate Fact Finding Committee on Labor and Welfare Parts 1-2, 1961, 1963

*Folder 3*

The condition of farm workers annual reports, 1958-1965, 1967

*Folder 4*

*Farm Workers and the Law, 1967*

Migrant workers, 1962

National advisory committee on farm labor, activities report, 1966
Public funds used to develop activities for migrant farm workers, 1967
*Wages and Working Conditions of Migrant Farm Workers*, 1966

Other (4 folders)

Folder 1
- *A New Era in Farm Labor*, 1967
- *Background for Cooperative Effort in Serving Migrants*, 1956
- *Justicia al Obrero del Campo*, 1967
- The migrant farm worker, 1960
- Non-cash benefits survey, 1967

Folder 2

Folder 3
- *Organizability of Farm Workers*, 1952
- *Problems and Efforts to Deal with Farm Labor*, 1968

Folder 4
- Working conditions, 1947, 1964

Office of Economic Opportunity (OEC) War on Poverty grant

Box

**Correspondence**
- Hagen, Harlan, 1965-1966
- Kuchel, Thomas H., 1965
- Economic opportunity act congressional bill, 1964-1966
- Newspaper clippings, 1965 and undated
- Resolutions passed by Kern County against OEC grant, 1965
- Sargeant Shriver letter, 1965
- Telegrams, 1965

**Chavez, Cesar (see also box 1, Yinger bibliography, Cesar Estrada Chavez)**

**Box**

**Bibliography, 1965-1973**
- Chronology, undated
- Journal article interviews, 1970-1971
- Possible appointment to a federal position
  - Hagen correspondence, 1966
  - FBI report, undated
  - Newspaper clippings, 1966
  - Telegrams, 1966
- Speech on money and organizing, 1971

**Strike and boycott against grapes**

**Box**

**Contracts**
- DiGiorgio Corporation, 1967
- Schenley Farms, undated
- Magazine article, 1966

**Pilgrimage**
- Schedule of trip to Sacramento, undated
- Plan of Delano (reprint in English) undated

**Pro-farm worker material**
- Appeals to striking farm workers, 1965 and undated
- Buy union label grapes poster, undated
- Kennedy medical plan, undated
- Interview with Jim Drake, 1971

**Newsletters**
- *American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations* (AFL-CIO), 1965
- *Delano Newsletter*, 1967 and undated
- NFWA
El Malcriado, 1967-1968, [shelved with Woodward periodicals]
Grape Strike Bay Area Newsletter, 1966
Ministry, 1972
Washington Report, 1966
Letters
  Reunion in Calixco, undated
  Senate bill 40, 1971
Strike in Salinas, undated
Pro-grower material
  DiGiorgio fact sheet, 1966
  Hagen correspondence, 1966
  Newspaper clippings, 1966 and undated
Newsletters
  Citizens For Facts from Delano, 1966
  Council of California Growers, 1965 and 1966
Pamphlets, undated
  Anti-consumer boycott
  Clergy's views on boycott
  Growers' view
Telegrams (charges brought against law enforcement by Chavez), 1966