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THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION:
A CASE STUDY IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

by

Sadhu Binning
B.A. Simon Fraser University, 1982

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
Sociology and Anthropology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
August 1986

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THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION: A CASE STUDY IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the struggles for unionization by a marginal labour sector. The formation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU) in early 1980 was more than the conventional emergence of a trade union. This study examines, from the perspective of political economy, the reasons why the unionization effort took the form of a social movement and, once formed, what effects the CFU had on the overall struggle. It maintains that constraints of the agricultural industry, and the marginality of the labour force involved, necessitated wider mobilization of support, but that once it became a functioning trade union it was no longer able to maintain this support.

Partly due to natural obstacles in agricultural production and partly due to the lack of manifested class struggle, no significant capital penetration took place, and, consequently, the industry remained numerically dominated by labour-intensive production units, a good part of which are family owned and operated. The labour force for this sector has historically been drawn from newly arrived immigrant communities - the most economically vulnerable sector of the workforce. In British Columbia - particularly in the Lower Mainland, the main site of CFU's activity - Punjabi immigrants from India have been the main source of agricultural labour.

A Farm Workers Organizing Committee was formed in early 1979 which provided both leadership and an organizational vehicle to pursue the
issues affecting labour conditions in the farming industry. Within a year the CFU emerged. The study finds that while the CFU was not a total success in the conventional sense of union organizing efforts, it did manage in its initial phase to sustain a broad based social and public pressure and to at least partly affect the legislative and other institutional frameworks affecting the labour process in the farming industry.

Using archival material, newspaper reports, government statistics, and the files of the CFU as well as detailed, non-structured interviews with a cross section of people, this study is a contribution to the growing literature on labour history as well as to the literature on social movements.
DEDICATION

To my father, (late) Mr. Jit Singh Binning, and mother, Mrs.

Gurmej Kour Binning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I wish to express my gratitude to the many farmworkers in British Columbia who expend heavy labour under oppressive conditions. Most of them remain unknown to me, but many among them provided useful information, and even more useful inspiration, for this study.

Not only this thesis, but the whole farmworkers' movement wouldn't have come into existence had it not been for the hard and dedicated work by people like Raj Chouhan, Sarwan Boal and Judy Cavanagh among others, who deserve admiration and much gratitude. Many gave me invaluable time for interviews.

I feel deeply indebted to Hari Sharma, not only for being my senior supervisor, but being a friend in need for many years. This study would never have been completed without his patience and sympathetic understanding.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This study is a sociological analysis of the processes underlying the formation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU), its achievements and lack of achievements. It focuses on the struggles for unionization by a sector of the labour force which is marginal in nature, inasmuch as agriculture in a fully developed capitalist society like that of Canada is marginal. Partly due to certain structural aspects of the agricultural economy which restrict large scale capitalization in the productive process and partly due to the marginality of the labour force involved, this sector of the work force has been traditionally regarded as unorganizable.

A group of farmworkers and activists nonetheless began organizing farmworkers in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (B.C.) in the beginning of 1979. Following more than a year of organizing efforts by a Farm Workers Organizing Committee, the formation of the CFU was announced on April 6, 1980 in New Westminster B.C.

The formation of the CFU was a significant event for the Canadian trade union movement, because despite the existence of highly exploitative conditions, no organizing activity had taken place for a long time in the agriculture sector. However, in the earlier decades of this century several unsuccessful attempts were made to organize farmworkers, especially, by the Industrial Workers of the World (Haythorne and Marsh, 1941: 364). This organizing activity was very intensive during the Depression period. For example, between 1930 and 1935, the Workers’ Unity
League organized four local unions of farmworkers in Ontario, two in Alberta and one in British Columbia (Ibid). However, with the exception of a sugar-beet workers' union in Southern Alberta, these organizations did not last too long. Even the Beet Workers' Industrial Union was forced out of existence by the farmers in 1942. One reason for the comparatively long life of this union was that the work situation in the sugar-beet industry resembled a factory more than a farm (Thompson and Seager, 1978).

Due to these earlier failures and also due to the enormous difficulties involved, there have been no efforts to organize in this sector since the 1940s. Consequently, the sector came to be regarded as unorganizable by the trade union movement. For these reasons the announcement of the CFU in early 1980 was seen as an important landmark in the history of the trade union movement in Canada.

Unionization of any traditionally unorganized sector is always a significant event. The formation of the CFU was even more significant than this. The whole phenomenon of the farmworkers struggle for unionization in B.C. has been characterized in a variety of ways - by a sociologist as "a social movement" (Sharma, 1983), by the president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, as the raison d'être of the B.C. trade union movement" (Interview with Art Kube, December 18, 1985), and by a journalist as "a force to be reckoned with: not just another union, but representing the moral force within the B.C. Fed." (Interview with Terry Glavin, August 12, 1985). To anyone who has witnessed the movement around the farmworkers' struggle, these observations would not appear to be exaggerations.
As a trade union, the CFU could hardly be called a big success. It was able to organize an insignificant percentage of the labour force engaged in the farming industry and succeeded in securing only a few certifications, in year-round operations. Still it acquired a public profile disproportionate to its success as a union.

The purpose of this study is to determine the significance of the formation of the CFU as a social movement. The contention here is that its impact went beyond the limited arena of a trade union struggle; in that it influenced the overall political climate in the province. It received constant media attention, more than any other sector of the labour force. All levels of the trade union movement - local unions, local district councils, the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Confederation of Canadian Unions, the Canadian Labour Congress - came forward to support the farmworkers' struggle.

Support came from the wider community as well. A large number of people and organizations were mobilized in support of the farmworkers' cause - community organizations, political parties, religious organizations, women's organizations, lawyers, professors, students, artists, singers and many other concerned individuals. There were frequent demonstrations, agitations, petitions, marches, and public meetings attended by a large cross section of people. Numerous support committees were organized across Canada, particularly in large urban centers such as Montreal and Toronto. In fact, the CFU moved beyond B.C. and made significant efforts to organize farm labour in Ontario and Manitoba. Internationally also, it established links with the equivalent movement in the US; Cesar Chavez of the United Farm
Workers of America made numerous visits to B.C. as a guest of the CFU. Furthermore, numerous artists lent their talents to the farmworkers' movement for organizing and fundraising. Films were made about the struggle. Poetry, songs and plays were written and performed in its support. This study therefore, while focussed on a particular segment of the labour force, and on the struggles for unionization, is more appropriately a study of a "social movement".

Inasmuch as the mobilization of people was less directed against any one employer and more toward the legal institutions which affected the labour process in the farming sector, and in that a vast majority of people who were mobilized into action were not farmworkers but members of the larger community, the entire phenomenon acquired the character of a "social movement". Even in those cases where agitation against particular farmers or contractors took place, its significance was more as a rallying point for the larger issue than for immediate trade union gains.

Analytical Framework And The Organization Of The Thesis

The central question for this investigation is: why did a struggle for union and other working class rights assume the character of a widespread social movement? The starting point obviously is the very structure of the political-legal framework, affecting not only the rights of workers, but also consequently the conditions of work. Labour in the agricultural sector had been excluded from the legal protections that other workers enjoyed in the province. The only other sector in this position has been the domestic labour force. In practical terms, this
meant that farmworkers were excluded from the Labour Code, from the Hours of Work Act, the Payment of Wages Act, the Minimum Wage Act, the Workers' Compensation Act, and many other similar legislations. The existence of the contract labour system, relatively very low wages, hard and unsafe working conditions were among the direct consequences of these exclusions.

These legal barriers reflected the state's attitude toward a whole sector of the labour force. When the fact became a public issue, among other things it embarrased the complacent and entrenched bureaucracy of the organized labour movement, and shocked the larger community's conscience, creating a great deal of sympathy for the farmworkers' struggles. Also within the broad political atmosphere of the province, with the overt anti-labour policies of the Social Credit government, the farmworkers' struggles easily became a rallying point for political agitation.

The next question that arises is: why did these legal barriers excluding the farming sector from labour legislation exist. In other words why was this institutionalized discrimination erected against a whole sector of the economy? Popular explanations have generally focussed on the strong political lobby of the farmers, as well as on the hold of the ideology of homestead or family farming in B.C.'s political climate. Although there is some truth in these views, a sociological study needs to go beyond these to underlying social forces in the context of evolution.

This study maintains that two interrelated aspects of the agricultural sector need to be examined. First, there are structural constraints within the agricultural economy (such as the role nature plays in the production process) which tend to
restrict large scale capitalization in the sector and second, there is the marginality of the farm labour force. This marginality itself has two aspects to it: the seasonal and transitory character of the labour force, and its ethnic make-up. Both of these aspects together define the specific marginality of the labour in B.C. agriculture. The first is due to the very nature of the agricultural industry, while the second has a particular historical specificity.

Everything said so far relates only to the objective forces and realities present in the agricultural sector, realities which constituted the basic conditions for the farmworkers' struggle to assume the character of a wider social movement. However, objective conditions are never adequate to explain why a certain mobilization takes place. These factors after all have been present for a long time. For the objective conditions to be transformed into a social mobilization, organized and conscious social action on the part of some human agency is an equally necessary prerequisite. In the case of B.C. farmworkers, this is what actually seems to have happened. In the late seventies, some socially conscious individuals and organizations in the Indo-Canadian community - a community to which the majority of farmworkers belonged - actively began to take initiative concerning problems faced by these people.

This study, thus, will have two major components: one dealing with the objective conditions that characterized the agricultural industry and its labour force, and the other an analysis of the conscious and organized efforts that worked upon those objective conditions to create a broad-based movement. Both of these components will be dealt with in detail.
As pointed out earlier, workers' ethnicity in the agricultural industry is one of the two features which define the marginality of this sector of the labour force. It was also noted that this particular aspect is historically specific. In other words, the marginality of the labour in agriculture does not have to depend upon its ethnic makeup. In British Columbia, however, (especially, in the Lower Mainland of B.C. where the farmworkers' movement had attained much of its momentum) ethnicity had been a constant factor. In recent decades the immigrants from China and India have constituted a bulk of the farmworkers in this area.

This feature of ethnicity makes the farmworkers' struggle a combination of racial and class issues. One level where these two issues come together is at the work-place itself. The employer often tries to turn workers' struggles into racial issues. But as Sharma argues, any fight against racism in a work-related situation does not have to deflect class struggle (Sharma, op.cit.). He maintains that "the real adversary in the situation is the employer, i.e. capital; and the workers, as workers, do not find it difficult to see it this way" (Ibid.:67).

The second level where race and class merge is at the institutional-legal level. The farmworkers in B.C. are either Third World immigrants or other ethnic or national minorities. The exclusion of this sector's labour force from legal protections amounts to legalized or institutionalized racism. And as Dutton (1984) has pointed out, this is due to the effects of capital development on ethnic minorities in B.C. In their constant desire to have access to cheap labour, capitalists encourage racial divisions. At the same time workers need to protect their jobs and wage rates. He argues that in B.C. these
"contradictory class interests" have been the "basis of ethnic antagonisms including racially defined immigration and labour legislation" (Dutton, 1984:4). By focusing on the farmworkers' situation he has demonstrated how the institutionalized racism is the real cause of present working conditions in the agricultural industry (Ibid).

Dutton is correct in asserting that institutionalized racism is the root cause of farmworkers' present situation. But at the same time it is not correct to draw the conclusion, as Jhappan (1983) has done, that the rise of the CFU was an ethnic community's response to "legislative discrimination". She has argued that the Social Credit government's Employment Standards Act of 1980 has "obviated the basis of the CFU's continued struggle" (Jhappan, 1983:87). Inasmuch as the ethnic factor played an important part in the buildup of the farm labour movement, Jhappan is right. But it is incorrect to reduce the entire farmworkers' movement to the paradigm of ethnicity as she has done. This study maintains that in its most essential sense the farmworkers struggle - even as it acquired features of a broad social movement - was a class (and not ethnic) based movement. Its genesis was rooted in the question of class and its programme was centred around class-related issues.

The Site Of The Study

The geographical focus of this study is the Lower Mainland, also popularly known as the Fraser Valley, located on the Southern tip of the West Coast of British Columbia. Being close to the metropolitan centre of Vancouver this region has
been a major producer of the vital agricultural needs of the city population. The region is described as “B.C.’s most significant agricultural area, where over one-half of the province’s farm revenue is generated” (CFU, n.d.).

The number of farmworkers in this area had steadily increased since late 1960s. When the farmworkers struggle started at the end of the 1970s, the most common figure quoted in newspapers was between 7,000 and 8,000. The figures for farmworkers have always varied depending on the source. According to a recent CFU document the present (1985-1986) number is 20,000 seasonal and full-time year-round workers in the Fraser Valley (Ibid). Of these, “80% are Punjabi speaking immigrants from India, 15% are Chinese and Laotian. Sixty percent are women. Most speak little or no English” (Ibid).

The main source of this labour force had been the city of Vancouver and its suburban areas. The farmworkers’ movement originated and developed in the Lower Mainland. The proximity to the large population center had played an important role in turning the organizing efforts among farmworkers into a wider social movement.

The Canadian Farmworkers Union, as the name implies, intended to represent farmworkers across Canada and during its first few years it did try to organize not only in other parts of the province but in other provinces as well. However, its efforts elsewhere have not produced the same results as in the Fraser Valley. In fact the office of the CFU opened in Ontario was closed down within a year or so. For these very reasons the region as a focus for this study has been the obvious choice.
Before going into the mechanics of data collection, it is necessary to briefly discuss two important aspects of this project: first, that it is a study of a very contemporary situation, and second, my personal involvement in it. The main difficulty presented by this type of study was how to remain emotionally detached while observing a social situation which in the present case had obviously caused severe stress for numerous human beings?

Both sociology and sociologists are part of society: all social, political and economic constraints that exist in a society exist for them as well. In most cases the efforts of the sociologist to be objective end up in support of the status quo. Therefore in this study a conscious decision has been taken to not to be impartial. In this regard my feelings are similar to those expressed by Sam Kushner in the preface of his famous book, *Long Road To Delano*: “I did not approach this assignment as an “objective” reporter. If anything I was a partisan, one who was anxious for the newborn union movement to succeed” (Kushner, 1975:xiii).

The second aspect which needs to be discussed at this point is my own participation in the farmworkers movement right from the beginning. My involvement was many-faceted: as a participant in meetings, marches, and demonstrations, as a volunteer worker in the CFU, and as a poet and playwright.

This type of intimate involvement in the subject of study has both advantages and disadvantages for a sociologist. The obvious advantage is the availability of information. Not only
does one get the most up-to-date information, one is able to get behind the scene and get a real feeling of the aspirations and frustrations of the people involved. But at the same time, if one is closely identified with one side, it becomes an obstacle to collecting information from the opposing camp. Fortunately, it has not been much of a problem for me, mainly because I have never taken on any official position in the CFU and have always kept a very low profile.

The Sources And Collection Of Data

The research method often used to study contemporary movements is in-depth interviews with movement participants. This study includes in-depth interviews, together with the collection and analysis of already documented information.

The very first step in this project was library research. Relevant information about the political economy of agriculture in B.C. was collected from the census data and other government and non-government sources. This information was essential to determine different forces involved in the agricultural sector.

One rich source of information is the media, in particular three local newspapers: the Vancouver Sun, the Province and the Columbian. Enormous coverage of farmworkers' struggle by these papers proved to be quite useful for this study. Along with the above information I had ready access to the files of the CFU which contained newspaper clippings, briefs and other related documents. These were very helpful in constructing the chronological order of important events since the inception of the CFU and earlier struggles which led to the formation of the
union. In addition to this, an unofficial list of individuals and organizations who participated in the movement was also made available to me by the officials of the CFU.

Much of the information about the farmworkers' movement came from interviews conducted exclusively for this study. In order to simplify the task of interviews, the movement participants were divided into five different "populations". These populations are: farmworkers, union officials, sympathizers, contractors, and farmers. They were further demarcated into two distinct categories: those for the union - farmworkers, union officials, and sympathizers; and those against the union - farmers and contractors. The sympathizers were further broken into different groups such as trade union members, political activists, students, lawyers and so on.

For the purpose of interviews the selection of respondents was done by employing different types of sampling techniques for each group. For example, there were only a limited number of union officials, and since the focus of the study was the Fraser Valley, there were a limited number of contractors and farmers as well. Since there was no real choice, the interviews were conducted with whoever was willing to talk from these groups. However, there was choice as far as farmworkers and sympathizers were concerned. An effort was made to select a sample of farmworkers which included seasonal and year-round workers, workers of both sexes, workers of all ages, those who lived on the farms and those who travelled to and from the farms. The respondents were randomly selected from these various groupings. In the same way, sympathizers were selected from various organizations and individual participants.
The interviews were conducted in a very informal manner. A recording tape was used except in those instances where the individuals did not feel comfortable. In such cases main points of the conversation were noted during or immediately after the interviews. The real names of the respondents have been used with the exception of a few individuals who expressed objection to the use of their names. The respondents were encouraged to relate whatever they wished as long as it was under the general guidelines limited to the problems and activities of farm labour in the Fraser Valley and respondent's own relations to them. The questions were asked according to each person's own area of interest and activity. For example, while the organizers were asked questions mainly relating to the movement in general, farmworkers who went on strike were asked specific questions mainly relating to their own immediate concerns and problems. The tapes were later transcribed.

The method of collecting data through in-depth interviews was the most feasible for this study. For example, a survey research with a pre-constructed questionnaire may not have been appropriate for this particular project. It was felt that through survey research it would be difficult to get a sense of a participant's real feelings toward the movement, its goals, its leaders, and the changing phases of the movement. To know how they felt about the movement at different times and how it changed their perception and participation was invaluable for this study.
Organizational Format

Since the thesis is directly concerned with the phenomenon of social movements, it is necessary to clarify relevant controversial issues contained in the sociological literature. Chapter Two will focus on these issues of definition, classification, genesis, structure and consequences of social movements, keeping the phenomenon of B.C.'s farmworkers' struggle in the background.

The focus of Chapter Three is petty commodity production and the political economy of agriculture in British Columbia. Despite the growing influence of large-scale farms, the agricultural industry is still characterized by small-scale farms. One direct implication of this is that the industry as a whole remains labour intensive. The employers in the capitalist system are always in search of cheap labour to minimize costs of production but in the case of B.C. growers this need is intensified due to competition from across the border. Cheap labour does not simply mean low pay for the workers, but also the absence of health protection, sufficient housing, necessary sanitary and other facilities, safe transportation, and so on. This chapter will advance the argument that the low level of capital development in this sector contributed towards making the farmworkers struggle a social movement.

Chapter Four examines the labour process in the farming sector of B.C.. Labour in this sector is traditionally recruited from newly immigrated communities often through labour contractors. This leads to further exploitation of the labour force and creates conditions for protest. Also included in this
chapter are discussions about the attitude of the state and of organized labour toward the farm labour force. Due to the exclusion from the protection of labour legislations the state was one of the three targets of the movement. Once the struggle started in the agricultural industry, help from organized labour was overwhelming.

Chapter Five traces the development of the movement from its inception. What precipitated the protest to begin with? What were the goals and who were the target enemies? Where did the leadership come from? Who were the participants and why did they participate? What was the reaction from the media and the larger community? What were the methods used by the organizers to mobilize support? How and when did the protest become a movement? These questions are dealt with in considerable detail in this chapter.

The farmworkers' movement went through different phases in its short history. Chapter Six explores these phases along with a discussion of the many achievements of the movement. Though not a total success as a trade union, the movement has won rights and concessions for farmworkers.

The study is concluded in Chapter Seven. Through the various stages the conclusion is reached that though the struggle seems to have lost its momentum for the time being, it can again become a social movement, since there have been no significant qualitative changes in the objective conditions of farmworkers.
Notes to Chapter I

1. The term "farmworkers" for this study means workers involved in the agricultural sector which include full-time, part-time, year-round and seasonal. In the Fraser Valley year-round workers are employed in greenhouses, nurseries, mushroom farms and canneries. Seasonal pickers work on soft fruit crops, vegetables orcole crops, and they move from farm to farm throughout the season.

2. The Lower Mainland which is also popularly known as the Fraser Valley, is part of the Mainland District. The Mainland District is one of the eight districts of B.C. as specified by the Statistics Canada for census purposes.
"SOCIAL MOVEMENTS" - CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

This study maintains that the formation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union and all the struggles centred around the rights of farmworkers were not merely a conventional activity to organize a sector of the working class. From its very beginning the CFU maintained a high public profile. It continued to draw sympathy and concern from a wide range of people. Despite its lack of success as a trade union, it was seen as a credible working class organization by the trade union movement across Canada. Accordingly, this study maintains that the entire process of organizing farmworkers sustained the character of a social movement. This chapter attempts to delineate, at a conceptual level, the main features of what are known in the sociological literature as social movements.

Social movements are normal manifestations of everpresent class conflict in class societies such as Canada. This class conflict can express itself in different ways, giving rise to different types of social movements. A social movement can involve a whole society or a nation against some other society or nation. The anti-colonial movements of the Third World are examples of this. It can involve a whole set of classes or it can be a protest by a small portion of a class against another class in a society. The former can be demonstrated by revolutionary movements such as the Russian or Chinese revolutions and the latter by the example of a strike action or a trade union movement such as the Canadian Farmworkers Union.

The above mentioned view of social movements is not
universally accepted. For some analysts, social movements are spontaneous responses to strains in society. Whenever part of an otherwise healthy and harmonious society does not function properly, the relations of people are impaired. These situations give rise to social protest which eventually develop into social movements, if it is not immediately settled. Social movements, according to this view, are not normal happenings in society. They arise because of the malfunctioning of the structure of society as a whole or some of its parts.

These different approaches have led to numerous conceptual problems in the study of social movements. The questions of definition, classification, genesis of social movements, structure and consequences of social movements have to be dealt with before an attempt can be made to study farmworkers struggle as a social movement. The following is a brief discussion about these conceptual problems that are contained in the abundant literature in the sociology of social movements.

Definition

Almost all definitions of social movements agree about two main aspects - collective action and change orientation (see for example, Turner and Killian, 1957; Garner, 1977; Rao, 1978; Rush 1979). Disagreement exists on other issues such as the role of ideology and mobilization methods. For instance, some sociologists do not even include ideology in their definitions (Turner and Killian, 1957) while others place great emphasis on this particular aspect (Rao, 1978). Similarly, Garner (1977) considers mobilization methods to be a significant part of social
movements' definition, while Aberle (1966) is silent about it.

However, as far as the farmworkers movement is concerned, it can be equally well defined by using a number of definitions including Garner's, which is as follows:

They (social movements) are self consciously directed toward changing the social structure and/or ideology of a society, and they either are carried on outside of ideologically legitimated channels of change or use these channels in innovative ways. (Garner, 1977:1)

The farmworkers' struggles were actions collectively undertaken not only by farmworkers but also by a large number of people from various different backgrounds. These collective actions were directed toward partial change, both in the social structure and ideology of the society. Legitimate channels of change are used but with a difference - in order to influence those channels other means of social pressure such as marches, rallies and demonstrations are utilized as well.

Classification

Since social movements differ from one another, it is necessary to construct some framework to identify their different types, even though this may have some drawbacks. As Rush puts it, "this legacy of Weberian methodology gives a static quality to what is being studied and especially when studying dynamic events like social movements" (Rush, 1979:440). Sociologists, generally, have a tendency to devise their own typologies. For example, Aberle (1966) feels that there are four major types of social movements: transformative, redemptive, reformative and alterative. Rush (1979), on the other hand, has come up with six
types: rebellion, revolution, resistance, reaction, reform and expressive. Others have classified them differently.

The farmworkers' movement can be easily classified by using either of these frameworks. Using Rush's typology, this movement can be seen as a reform movement since it aimed to modify existing laws and improve working conditions. On the political spectrum it can be placed in the middle. Not only the left but religious groups and other non-political groups and individuals supported it as well. Though there was active protest in the sense that there were marches, rallies and demonstrations, it did not resemble rebellion.

Genesis of Social Movements

One of the main issues in the study of social movements is to explain their emergence. This issue has been the subject of considerable theorizing. Broadly speaking, the most popular approach to explaining the emergence of a social movement has been the theory of relative deprivation (Aberle, 1966; Gurr, 1970). Other approaches such as the strain theory (Smelser, 1962), the resource mobilization perspective (Luebke, 1981; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977), and the perspective of political economy (Garner 1977; Rush, 1979) are also widely used to explain the rise of social movements. Following is a brief discussion about these various approaches.

Two distinct trends have developed in the theory of relative deprivation. One line is based on the notion of conflict and can be traced back to Marx and has recently been further developed by Aberle and Gurr. The other trend basically deals
with social mobility. Merton (1950) and Runciman (1961) used relative deprivation as the basis of their studies of social mobility. Runciman developed the notion in relation to reference groups, problems of inequality and social injustice.

Common to most definitions of relative deprivation is the notion that it is a perceived discrepancy between expectations and reality. Aberle defines it as a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and actuality or anticipated actuality. He feels that social movements arise because within a given society a group of human beings have feelings of "distress, deprivation, dysphoria, and discontent" (Aberle, 1966:323). For Gurr (1970), however, legitimate expectations are not the only important element which causes the rise of a movement. Equally important are the perceived abilities to achieve these expectations. Relative deprivation, according to him, is the realization that individual achievements have failed to keep pace with individual expectations.

Although some quarters have recently argued that there is little evidence that social movements are caused by relative deprivation (Gurney and Tierney, 1982), it is still seen as a useful tool by many in the field. For example, Rao feels that it offers a more satisfactory explanation because "it is centered around contradiction, conflict and cognitive charge, motivating people and mobilizing them around certain issues" (Rao, 1979:245).

The second widely used approach is known as the collective behaviour or the strain theory. The emergence of social movements, according to this approach, is seen as the result of structural strain in a society. The normal state of society is thought to be harmonious and healthy and conflict is the sign of
an unhealthy state. Whenever a part of the system fails to function properly it causes the relations to be impaired. Frustrations caused by the malfunctioning of the system grows into popular excitement, which eventually takes on organizational form due to the efforts of movement leaders. Smelser (1962), who is the main proponent of this approach, felt that the underlying factor of collective behavior was clearly the structural strain.

The third approach, developed to counter the collective behavior research, is known as the resource mobilization perspective. It rejects earlier approaches on the ground that their focus was on social movements as products of antecedent conditions (Luebke, 1981). By contrast they emphasize the "incentives, costs, and benefits that movement's participants consider before a movement is launched" (Ibid.:256). Jenkins and Perrow (1977), who also contributed to the development of resource mobilization perspective, maintain that social movements are consequences of skilled resource utilization, with little regard to the level of discontent.

The fourth and the last approach examined here is the perspective of political economy. For the proponents of this perspective, "history is a dialectical process and social movements are normal manifestations of the contradictions inherent in that process" (Rush, op.cit.:436). Social movements are then people's responses to power relationships of society. Power here "is the ability, arising out of ownership or control of the means of production, to control the flow of resources and material and social rewards available to a society at any given time" (Ibid.:438). Since these means of production are not collectively owned by the whole society, few people who own them
also control the material and social rewards as well. This inevitably leads to the development of different classes of people depending on their relationships to the means of production. These societies, such as Canada, where a large majority of the people belong to the working class and do not own the means of production but have to work for wages, are called class societies.

In class societies, due to economic and social inequalities caused by class differences, there is no basic social harmony. On the contrary, conflict is always present among different classes. Whenever the working class, as a whole or in parts, demands economic equality or a larger share of social benefits, this conflict surfaces. These demands of the working class often develop into social movements. The demands and the portion of the working class involved in a particular movement determine the type and actions of that movement.

These movements do not always develop around overt economic issues; they can be for political, social, religious, cultural or other concerns. However, the perspective of political economy would argue that in most cases the underlying concern for movements is economic which may be expressed in social, political or religious demands.

From the above discussion on these various approaches, it becomes clear that for our purposes they can all be employed to explain the rise of the farmworkers' movement. Perhaps the last approach discussed - the perspective of political economy - is preferable, because it gives us a larger theoretical framework through which we can adequately explain all the social movements in general contextual terms. By comparison, this may be difficult
to do by using the resource mobilization perspective. Their claim that movement participants actually consider "incentives, costs and benefits" before launching a movement may be true in some cases but not in others. For example this perspective is not able to adequately explain the rise and fall of the Solidarity Movement in 1983 in British Columbia.

Still these different approaches should not be discarded altogether, their additional use in explaining the origins of social movements can make all the more sense. For instance, the immediate cause of the farmworkers' movement could be explained by utilizing the relative deprivation theory. The farmworkers saw that other workers in British Columbia were receiving higher wages, better legal protection, better housing and health benefits and so on. This comparison led to the feeling of deprivation. In addition, the reference group concept can be drawn upon. The reason that these workers or some of them at least, did not feel deprived, was that their reference group back in India was still worse off than they were in Canada. When their reference group changed from Indian workers to that of Canadian workers, they felt deprived.

The resource mobilization perspective is also applicable to the present study. Before the farmworkers' movement was actually launched, there were lengthy discussions among the original organizers about the possibilities of the success of the movement. This clearly follows what the resource mobilization perspective advocates.
The Structure Of Social Movements

A movement consists above all of people in interaction. It is people who carry out its values and struggle for certain goals. As a group of people start interacting together, a structure begins to emerge. As the structure develops, an organization within the movement starts to take shape with some individuals identified as leaders and others taking on other roles. It is at this point that the members of a society recognize that a social movement has arisen.

An important aspect of a movement’s development is the formation of its ideology which is usually formulated in the course of the social movement itself. Not all movements develop their own original ideologies, often they borrow ideas from various sources which they apply to their own situations. The ideology plays an important role for a movement’s own unity. It provides norms to coordinate the relationships among members and a framework for identifying the problems and the target enemy as well. It helps to develop and increase commitment. The amount of support members give to a movement can depend on the strength of their belief in its ideology. The ideology also greatly influences the type of organization the movement develops and at the same time it influences the mobilization methods to be used.

Like ideology, collective mobilization is also essential for a movement’s continued existence and success. The moment a movement stops collective action, it stops being a social movement. Due to the significant role it plays, social movements have been often studied as collective behavior.

Collective mobilization is the only way a social movement
can succeed, for it is through mobilization that non-members can be brought into the movement. It is the level of mobilization that helps to convince people that the movement has some chances of success. As more and more people become members of a movement chances of its success are raised even higher. Mobilization is the real vehicle that can take a movement to its goals.

It is at the stage of collective action that a movement reaches a crucial deciding point. It must decide whether it is going to use the legitimate means of the society or is going to operate outside those channels. Some authors go as far as to include in the definition of social movements the condition that they "must operate outside of the legitimate channels of change in society, or at least attempt to use these channels in innovative ways" (Rush, op. cit., 438).

Besides ideology and collective mobilization, leadership and organization are also very important. In the analysis of social movements the role of leadership often receives more importance than it deserves. This downplays the role that economic, social and political conditions play in the emergence and success of a movement, as well as undermining the importance of organization. The use of Weber's 'charismatic leadership' concept is still very common. It is a normal thing for a reader of social movements to come across statements like this: "The most successful movements in this century all had leaders with outstanding charismatic appeal: Lenin, Gandhi, Hitler and Mao Tse-Tung, to name only a few" (Clark, Grayson and Grayson, 1975:15).

Even if it was true that a leader plays a significant part in a social movement, the role of the organization is no less
significant. The stronger the organization, the stronger will be the movement. The organization of a social movement differs from the organization of political parties and trade-unions. A social movement may have more than one organization but there is always one that coordinates the others within the movement. According to Rao:

Normally, social movements tend to develop a loose federal structure with central and regional association being held together by relationship of local autonomy and external links based on common interests. (Rao, 1978:9)

As mentioned earlier, the ideology of a movement influences the type of organization the movement develops. The activities of a movement are dictated by its ideology. The activities in turn determine the organization. According to Lenin, "the character of any organization is naturally and inevitably determined by the content of its activity" (Lenin, 1975:122).

Social movements are dynamic phenomenon; they not only act as vehicles for social change, they themselves go through changes in their life histories. A movement can easily change from one type to another. It can have a change of leadership along the way. It can go through organizational changes as well. However, a movement cannot have changes in its goals and ideologies. Any change in these aspects may mean the end of a social movement.
The Consequences Of Social Movements

All movements ultimately come to an end. However, not all movements bring social change; many end without realizing their proclaimed goals. Yet no movement can be labeled a total failure; even the ones that do not succeed in their aims leave their impact on society. Successful movements usually become institutionalized and lose their character as movements. A movement can go through a variety of transformations: it may be suppressed or dissolved by social pressure for having non-legitimate goals, or it may merge with other movements. It may decline as a result of internal factionalism or splits. These splits may come about as conflicts between leaders or differences in opinions.

Though the internal causes can sometimes bring a movement to its end, it is usually external pressures that transform or end it. According to Rush, these transformation processes can be described as 'institutionalization, co-optation, discreditation and repression' (Rush, op.cit:447). A movement when successful either becomes an institution itself, for example a political party or a trade union, or its goals are absorbed into policies of the existing establishment. The decline in the Canadian Farmworkers Movement has come about because it has become an institution itself.

The second transformation process - co-optation - takes place when dissident elements are absorbed into the status quo. Co-optation is a "common means of neutralizing social movements in pluralist societies, where a certain legitimacy is given to political competition" (Ibid.:447). Mostly it is the leadership of
a movement which is co-opted by the status quo, but in some cases
the issues or ideologies of a movement may also be affected by
external pressures. Rush believes that "reform movements are the
most amenable to co-optation" because they are not after total
change and still conform to part of the ideology of the
establishment (Ibid.: 448).

The third process, which Rush calls discreditation, is
also a commonly used tool by the ruling class to discredit a
social movement. This is usually done through the media. Either
the leaders of a movement or its ideology or both are criticized
and ridiculed in the media. This technique is widely used in
modern capitalist societies, especially against the labour
movement.

In societies with less freedom the overt state force is
used to repress social movements. This does not mean that the so-
called pluralist societies do not use force; it is simply less
frequent. Movements which aim to bring total change in societies
are often met with repression by the state.

In the case of the farmworkers' movement some of these
processes of movement transformation are noticeable. As mentioned
earlier, it has ceased to be a movement because it has become an
institution itself - a trade union. There seems to have been some
coopération, though in a very indirect way. However, to the
surprise of a lot of trade union organizers, the media was quite
positive towards the farmworkers' movement, especially when a
mood of confrontation between labour and the Social Credit
government was developing in British Columbia.
As discussed in chapter one, this study maintains that the factors which turned the trade union activity in B.C.'s farm industry into a social movement included both the objective conditions as well as subjective forces. The objective conditions pertain to the manner in which labour is recruited and exercised. This in turn requires looking at some of the features of B.C.'s agricultural industry: specifically, what it produces, the cropping pattern, regional variations, the scale of production (size of holdings), the quality of labour needs, etc. This chapter will focus on these matters. The next chapter will examine some of the significant aspects of the labour itself.

A PROFILE OF B.C.'S AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and related activities occupy an important position in the overall economy of the province. According to the B.C. government, 22.8% of the province's economic activity is generated directly or indirectly by the agricultural sector. In 1981, it generated a wholesale value of 2.6 billion dollars. Forestry with sales of $7.0 billion and mining with sales of $3.2 billion were the only two sectors ahead of agriculture. (B.C., Agricultural Statistic Yearbook, 1982:9) 1

For the purposes of both agricultural and population census, the whole province is divided by Statistics Canada into 29 divisions, which are grouped together according to
geographical proximity into 8 districts. These eight districts are: Kootenay (2 divisions), Okanagan (5 divisions), Thompson (2 divisions), Mainland (6 divisions), Island (6 divisions), Cariboo (2 divisions); Omineca (5 divisions) and Peace (1 division). (See Map No. 1).

Map No. I
B.C. AGRICULTURAL REPORTING REGIONS

The organizing drive of the farmworkers was mostly concentrated in the Lower Mainland, which is a part of what according to the Census categories constitutes the Mainland District (see Map No. 2), with a bit of effort in the Okanagan District. It is hardly surprising, since it is in these regions that the cultivation of crops requiring intensive labour is carried out.

Table 12, on the basis of some selected crops, shows how physical geography, climate and settlement patterns have resulted in pockets of crop specialization in B.C. Of all the acreage under wheat in the province, as much as 84.4% lies in the Peace District. Oats (77.1%), barley (88.4%), and forage seeds (83.2%) are similarly concentrated in this area. On the other hand 92.6% of the total acreage under tree fruits like apple, pear, plum, prune, cherry, peaches, apricots fall in the Okanagan District. The Mainland District specializes in growing vegetables (78.9% of the total acreage in the province), small fruits (74.1%), potatoes (65.6%), nursery and cut flowers (66.9%) and year-round greenhouse crops, including mushrooms (73.7%). The proximity to the large urban centre of Vancouver makes the growing of such crops easily understood. But nature has played some part too, at least as far as the growing of small fruits like strawberries, raspberries and blueberries is concerned. The Mainland region enjoys a moderate coastal climate with the longest frost-free period in Canada. So favorable are the climatic conditions that this small region produces 20 to 30 percent of all the berry fruit grown in Canada (Penner, 1980:4). Here it may also be pointed out that the 3,312 acres shown under "small fruits" in the Okanagan District in 1981 could be misleading: a detailed
MAP NO. 2

CENSUS DIVISIONS OF THE MAINLAND DISTRICT

SOURCE: Statistics Canada,
Agriculture: British Columbia.
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10.5**

Table 1: Concentration of Selected Crops in Census Districts of B.C., 1981 (in Acres)
breakdown of this area shows that as many as 2,947 acres out of this total are under grape cultivation (B.C., op.cit.,:42).

The Mainland District as defined by Statistics Canada, is made up of six divisions: Central Fraser Valley, Dewdney-Alouette, Fraser Cheam, Greater Vancouver, Sunshine Coast and Powell River (see Map 2). Of these, Sunshine Coast and Powell River are of not much significance for this study. Besides being sparsely populated, these are not really farming areas. Of the total 134,969 acres under all kinds of crops in 1981 in the Mainland District, only 680 acres were in these two divisions together, and of these only 135 acres were used for vegetables or fruit growing. Of the remaining four divisions, although Dewdney-Alouette and Fraser Cheam are farming areas with 13,920 and 34,643 acres under crops in 1981 respectively, their relevance for this study is limited—particularly Dewdney-Alouette where as much as 12,154 acres (87.3% of the total cropped area) were under silage corn, hay, oats for hay, and other fodder crops requiring very little labour input. In Fraser Cheam various fodder crops also occupy a very high proportion (73.9% of the cropped area). Vegetable growing is present too, with 4,824 acres, but this occupies only 13.9% of the cropped land. In any case efforts to mobilize farm labour never touched this region.

This leaves Greater Vancouver and Central Fraser Valley divisions. As Table 2 shows, it is in these areas that most of the horticulture crops grown in not only the Mainland District but also in the province as a whole are concentrated. As much as 64.5% of the acreage under vegetables in the mainland district in 1981 was located in these two urbanized and semi-urbanized
divisions, which amounted to 51% of the province's total. For small fruits (strawberries, raspberries etc.) the concentration was even higher: 88.7% of the district and 65.7% of the province. Similar was the story with year-round crops in greenhouses, including mushroom cultivation.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Small fruits</th>
<th>Nursery &amp; cut flowers</th>
<th>Greenhouse &amp; Mushroom (sq. ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>% of Mainland Dist.</td>
<td>% of Province</td>
<td>acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Fraser</td>
<td>4,042</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>5,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Vancouver</td>
<td>5,867</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>3,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals in two Dist.</td>
<td>9,909</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>9,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in Mainland District</td>
<td>15,348</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in B.C.</td>
<td>19,440</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13,789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1,745,071; **4,815,484; ***7,999,064; ****10,847,187

SOURCE: Computed from Table 17 and 18 of Statistics Canada, Agriculture: B.C. (Catalogue, 96-911, 1981)

Much of the steady and year-round labour force in B.C.'s agriculture is engaged in nurseries and greenhouse type operations - particularly mushroom cultivation. The seasonal labour is mostly used in vegetable and small fruit crops. These are the very sectors which depend heavily on the assured and timely supply of labour, especially at the time of harvesting. Mechanization of the harvesting operations of fruit and vegetable
crops has hardly been introduced in B.C. This is largely accounted for by the relatively small size of farms specializing in these kinds of crops.

Size of farms.

Looking at comparative data (see Table 3) from the four western provinces of Canada makes two things quite apparent. First the average size of farms in British Columbia is much smaller compared to the Prairie Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Given the climate and topographical features of the regions concerned as well as the crop specialization which follows, this difference should not

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask.</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definition of Farms:
1951: 3 acres or more with agricultural production in 1950 of a value of $250.00 or more.
1961 and 1971: 1 acre or more with sale of agr. produce in previous year of $50.00 or more.
1976: 1 acre or more with sale of agr. produce in 1975 of $1,250 or more.

come as a surprise. The second aspect concerns change over time. In view of the fact that the census definition of a “farm” was drastically altered between 1951 and 1961 (from 3 acres to one acre - see explanation note under table 3) the comparison over time becomes questionable. Nonetheless the trend during the two decades between 1951 and 1971 is quite clear. The average size of farms increased in all the four provinces; the proportionate increase in B.C. being in fact larger than in the prairies. Had the change in the definition of a “farm” between 1951 and 1961 (from 3 acres to one) not been made, this increase in the average size of farm would be even larger.

In the case of B.C., however, the upward change in the average size comes to a stop after 1971. It came down from 316 to 311 acres, showing a drop of 1.9%. It is even more significant when we take into account the fact that these figures are based upon a further redefinition of the term in 1976: to qualify for a “farm” it had to have a sale of agricultural produce in the amount of $1,250, and not just $50.00 as in the previous censuses. A large number of smaller farms were most likely eliminated by this definition. Even then the average size of farms showed a decline.

This decline has continued, as shown by the census data for 1981. It should be noted that this census completely eliminated the requirement of size (one acre or more) from the definition of a farm: the only criteria used was the sales value of agricultural products during the year 1980, and that being $250.00 or more. According to this definition, there were 20,012 farms in B.C. in 1981, covering an area of 5,383,428 acres. This amounts to an average farm size of 269 acres, a considerable
decline from the figure of 316 acres in 1971. Thus to repeat, (i) the average farm size in B.C. is considerably lower compared to the other Western Provinces, (ii) this average rose at a higher rate in B.C. compared to the other three provinces until 1971, but began to come down during the last census decennial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Size</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 69</td>
<td>18,175</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>11,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 559</td>
<td>7,026</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>4,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>560 $ over</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26,406</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The average size still does not show the whole picture. A much clearer view emerges when we look at the distribution of the total farms by their actual size. Table 4 shows this distinction. That small farms (less than 70 acres in size) constitute the bulk of farming units in B.C. is quite apparent from the data presented in this Table. Farms measuring 560 acres or more have
Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Size Acres</th>
<th>Mainland Dist.</th>
<th>Central Fraser Valley Division</th>
<th>Greater Vancouver Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 69</td>
<td>5,203</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>2,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 559</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>560 &amp; over</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,134</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from Table 12 of Census of Canada, Agriculture: B.C. (Catalogue, 96-911, 1981: Table 12).

Indeed increased both in absolute numbers as well as relative to the smaller ones, although this trend seems to be reversing after 1971. Despite this, the preponderance of small units continues to remain a defining feature of B.C.'s agriculture.

Looking closer at the Mainland District of B.C., we find that this preponderance of smaller units is even more pronounced. Table 5 shows this for the district as a whole, as well as for the Greater Vancouver and Central Fraser Valley divisions.

Large scale farming is only nominally a feature of both the Mainland District as well its two divisions where vegetable and small fruit cultivation, as noted earlier, are the predominate crops. Over 84% of all the farm units are less than 70 acres in size. Further breakdown of the data in this category shows that farms less than 10 acres in size amount to 39% of the total farms in the Mainland District. The respective figures for the Central Fraser Valley and for the Greater Vancouver divisions.
is 38.7% and 46.3%.

The small size of production units doesn’t however negate the economic significance the Mainland District has in the overall agricultural economy of the province. Out of the total value of agricultural products sold in the whole province in 1981, amounting to $799.6 million, as much as $424.6 million (or 53%) was produced in the Mainland District alone, despite the fact that it covered only 4.6% of the total farmland in the province. The two divisions (Central Fraser Valley and Greater Vancouver), while together containing only 2.8% of the province’s total farmland, produced as much as 38% of the value sold ($308.3 million). Furthermore, 66.2% of the total farm units in the province with sales value of $250,000.00 or more in 1981 were located in the Mainland District.

It should however be noted that increasingly a greater share of the value produced is coming from farms of larger size. In 1981 while farms less than 70 acres in size numbering 12,378 in the whole province, produced as much as 47.1% of the total sale value, as many as 8541 of them (or 69.7%) had the annual sales of less than $10,000 each. Table 6 shows that the number of farms with sale value of $50,000 and over has increased from 4.7% of the total units in 1971 to 17.5% in 1981, while those with less than $10,000 of sales have declined from 75.8% to 59.8%. The 1981 census figures also show that the 59.8% farm units with sales of less than $10,000 accounted for only 4.4% of the total annual sales. On the other hand, farms with sales of over $50,000 were only 17.5% of the total units but accounted for 82.4% of the total sales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Class</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. Farms</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $10,000</td>
<td>13,957</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-49,499</td>
<td>3574</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 &amp; Over</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from Table 3-1 of Statistics Canada, *Agriculture: British Columbia*. (Catalogue, 96-911, 1981)

The discussion so far shows that even as large and economically sound units have been occupying an important role in B.C.'s agriculture, the fact still remains that small scale farms continue to occupy a numerically strong position. Why is it so? One important factor, strongly supported by the data, is that the owners of the small units do not wholly depend on farm income for their livelihood. On the contrary, some may even support their "hobby" or "retirement" farms by "off farm income" — income earned from sources other than their farms. This is mainly the case in the Mainland District where, due to proximity to the city of Vancouver, a significant number of people commute to work from their "hobby" farms.

The phenomenon of "off farm" income has become important as far as the continued existence of small farms is concerned. Some 51.2% units in B.C. reported "off farm" work which amounted to 1,980,302 days for the whole province. Out of those reporting "off farm" work, 64.6% were smaller (70 acres or less) units.
The number of days worked "off farm" also varied with the size of the unit. Out of the 4,377 units that reported "off farm" work consisting of 229 to 365 days a year, 3207 units had seventy acres or less. 7

A similar situation exist in the Mainland District, where 48% of the units reported "off farm" work. Out of those reporting, 53.2% worked from 229 to 365 days a year. 8

These figures reveal the extent to which "off farm" work has become part of the farm life in British Columbia. It can thus be inferred that without these "other" sources of income many of the small owners might lose their farms.

There is perhaps one other important factor that has helped the small farms to exist. There have developed co-operatives and marketing-boards in several different areas of B.C.'s agricultural industry. These structures have helped small producers to stay alive in the face of big business at home and competition from across the border.

B.C.'s Marketing Board has a two level structure. One level is known as the British Columbia Marketing Board (BCMB) which was established in 1935 under the Natural Product Marketing (B.C.) Act (B.C. Select Standing Committee, 1979:51). The second level of this structure is that producers of each individual commodity have their own marketing boards. For example, in the Okanagan Valley the British Columbia Tree Fruits Marketing Board (BCTFMB) has existed since 1934. There are a number of commodity marketing boards and some other similar organizations. The BCMB acts as a supervisory body over these various marketing boards and commissions (Ibid.).

This structure has helped to stabilize the production
process and market conditions for the small producers. However, the power and effectiveness of this structure is limited. For example, it has no control over food imports, thus it cannot protect its members against foreign competition. Similarly it has no control over the food processors who often play small producers against each other. These limitations of the co-operative/marketing board structures make it difficult for the small scale production units to maintain themselves.

Yet they still continue to exist, begging the question as to why the agricultural sector has not followed the general trend towards concentration and centralization of the means of production, as has been the case in other sectors of the economy. According to the popular belief, the idea of "family farm" has a strong traditional base in people's psyche and they are willing to defend their tradition at any cost. But this view fails to explain the development that has taken place in other sectors where there also existed strong traditions of family ownership such as in manufacturing. In the next section some theoretical observations are made in an effort to explain the continued existence of small scale production units in agriculture.

The Agricultural Sector's Anomaly

The data analyzed in the preceding section shows that numerically, B.C.'s agriculture continues to have a dominant presence of small-scale family-farm operations. The trend towards the centralization of the means of production, most importantly land, is advancing at such a slow pace that it is barely noticeable. When a sector of the economy such as agriculture
shows continued resistance to the concentration of the means of production, especially in an otherwise fully developed capitalist economy as in B.C., it demands explanations.

The above posed question is not only important to academics, it is also important to the people directly involved in the industry. Moreover, it is important to the state, which is responsible for developing programs and policies. It was for this reason that the government of B.C. appointed a Select Standing Committee on Agriculture (SSCA) in April 1977. A similar step had been taken earlier by the federal government of Canada.

In the final report released in 1970 by the Canadian federal government's Task Force, some light was shed on the pressures faced by small farms caught between cost/price squeeze. The report criticized small farm owners for their failure to become efficient and capitalistic in their operations. It said that small farmers lack "attitude and capacity" appropriate to agricultural production in the contemporary period (Canada, Task Force On Agriculture, 1970:20). The Task Force recommended that the agriculture industry should be "rationalized"; in other words, inefficient small units should be replaced by mechanized large units and agriculture should have structures similar to other industries (Ibid.).

The findings and recommendations of the B.C. government's SSCA were similar to those of the Task Force (B.C. Select Standing Committee, op.cit.). It also called for efficiency, and increased mechanization. Both the Task Force and the SSCA see the existing production units as being inefficient and suggest to change it. However the reasons offered for the continued existence of small scale units by the Task Force and SSCA are
similar to the popular ideological views referred to in the last section.

It is appropriate at this point to look for explanations behind the continued existence of small units of production in agriculture. These forms of production have been described in different terms in political economy: "simple commodity production" or as Marx called it "petty commodity production" (Marx, 1967:348). These terms refer to a situation where producers own the means of production and are directly engaged in labour. Since they own the means of production and do not hire wage labourers, they can be seen as being in total control of their production or constituting an "independent mode of production" (Ibid.). However, the conditions under which these "family farms" or "petty commodity producers" exist, make it impossible for them to be independent in any significant sense. Rather, they can be seen as part of the overall capitalist structure.

The very first problem that arises in the theoretical analysis is the term "family farm" itself. The term is widely used by government sources including the census department. However, the validity of the term is questionable. It has been generally employed to mean non-capitalist petty commodity production units. In its practical usage, the contribution of other members of the family have been ignored in favour of the farmer/owner. In an recent article William Reimer makes a strong case against the use of this term and suggests that "household" should be used as a unit of analysis (Reimer, 1983:292). He argues that the contribution of other members of the family is extremely important because it is this unpaid family labour which
keeps the unit alive in the face of external pressures.

The term "family farm" does not seem to do justice to the situation in British Columbia either. It is being used for all the "small-sized" farms which include "hobby" and "retirement" farms: farm units which use both unpaid family labour as well as wage labour; farm units whose owners rely on "off farm" income. The term "family farm" seems to create a lot of confusion, therefore, it should be used with care and only after the confusion is clarified.

The main theoretical problem at hand is: how to explain this anomaly - an economic sector's perpetual resistance to the encroachment of large scale, mechanized production in an otherwise fully developed capitalist economy.

Perhaps the best argument, at a general level, is presented by Mann and Dickinson (1978). They argue that the very nature of agricultural production presents obstacles to large scale capital penetration and they defend their argument by directly drawing from Marx's works. The main obstacle presented by agriculture is that the production time is longer than the socially necessary labour time. For much of agriculture production the socially necessary labour time is only a small portion of the total production time. For example, an animal still needs a few years before it could be slaughtered for meat. Science and technology are not advanced to the point where they could eliminate the time needed for fruit-bearing tree to start producing fruit. During this time of "natural process", neither value nor surplus is created though capital remains tied up in the process. As Marx said, "capital creates no surplus value as long as it employs no living labour" (Marx, 1973:670).
One of the basic needs of capital is to renew itself as soon as possible for reinvestment in order to create more surplus value. The longer capital remains tied in its incomplete circle, whether in the sphere of production or circulation, the less surplus value it creates. Thus the general tendency on the part of capital is to invest where the production time coincides with the socially necessary labour time, because it provides the maximum rate of return on the invested capital.

The problem is not only associated with the production sphere, it is faced in the circulation sphere as well. Mann and Dickinson argue that although the circulation sphere produces no surplus, it is unavoidable (Mann and Dickinson, 1978:475). They argue that there are problems with circulation in every type of production but due to its nature, agriculture presents extra problems in this sphere. Many agricultural products are perishable if not consumed in time. Agriculture as an industry, therefore, presents higher risks than most other industries. In their own words:

...those agricultural commodities whose production is characterized by an excess of production time over labour time necessitate the inefficient use of constant capital, labour recruitment problems, a lower rate of profit, and complications in the smooth realization of value in the sphere of circulation... As long as there are natural, objective constraints on the social manipulation of production time, capitalism will regard these as high cost areas of production. (Ibid.:478)

Mann and Dickinson's approach is helpful in understanding the kind of changes which have been taking place or have not been taken place in the agricultural sector of B.C. While the "natural obstacles" have been a factor in keeping away large scale concentration of the means of production and consequently, full
mechanization, thus allowing the small units to exist, at the same time outside pressures and capitalist market controls have reduced their economic viability. These outside pressures place the industry in a weak position compared to the agribusiness of California against which B.C.'s farmers have to compete. Thus constraints force B.C. farmers to reduce their cost of production. Paying less to labour is one way of reducing the cost which they rely on. As long as an inexpensive and unorganized labour force is available in abundance, even small farms are likely to continue to exist. The section which follows deals with the labour aspect of the agricultural industry in British Columbia.

Labour Intensive B.C. Farms

The demand for labour in B.C.'s agriculture fluctuates to a great degree mainly owing to the fact that farming is seasonal here. The season lasts from mid-spring to late fall, and during this time there are lean and peak periods of farm work. Since farming in this province is also divided into separate pockets, it has varying labour needs. Together these factors affect the workforce requirements in this sector.

While the majority of the workforce in the agricultural industry is employed seasonally, there are a few year-round operations - greenhouses, mushroom farms etc. - who employ a steadily increasing number of workers. According to a recent CFU document, in the peak of the season, there are about 14,000-15000 seasonal farmworkers plus approximately 7800 year-round workers in all of B.C. (CFU, n.d.).
The majority of these workers are employed in the Mainland District because of the large concentration of vegetable and berry fruit growing in the area, a concentration which has also been increasing. The acreage under vegetables has increased from 12,310 acres in 1961 to 19,440 acres in 1981 across B.C. Out of province’s total acreage under vegetables in 1981, 78.9% was in the Mainland District. Berry production has also increased during the 1970’s. It doubled between 1969 and 1978 from 25 millions pounds to 50 millions pounds. The annual sales from berries also increased from 6.5 million dollars to almost 26 millions of dollars during the same period (Penner, op.cit:4).

The increased production witnessed by these particular crops required larger number of workers during harvest time because berries are still picked by hand. The available census data does not provide sufficient information about the actual number of workers and their yearly increase/decrease or information about particular regions. However, general trends concerning labour can be noticed, from the census data about the paid work weeks.

According to 1981 census 7904 farms reported hired labour which amounted to 484,165 weeks of paid labour in all of B.C. Of these total paid weeks, 53% were paid in the Mainland District, while in 1979 the same figure was 45% of the total. A sum of 53 millions dollars out of the province’s total of 101 millions dollars in cash wages in agriculture was paid in this district. This portion of agricultural wages has increased from 40% of the province’s total in 1971 to 52.5% in 1981. Most of the year-round agricultural workers in the province were also employed by mushroom growers, greenhouses and nurseries in the Mainland
District. These figures clearly point to a trend toward increasing reliance on labour in the Mainland District in the last decade.

The farmers in this district as well as in rest of B.C. are a class of relatively weak petty commodity producers (Malcolmson, n.d.). As noticed earlier, they have to compete against the large agricultural conglomerates from across the border. Though under constant pressure these small producers in agriculture can keep on producing as long as they do not have to make large capital investments in purchasing machinery. In this regard even the large units of agriculture production remain labour intensive and avoid mechanizing their units as long as possible.

Corresponding to its own marginal and weak position, the agricultural industry needs a marginal labour force - a labour force which has no organizational or political power and which can be easily exploited. And so far, the farm industry has been able to recruit workers without even providing the minimum wages set by the government and the basic facilities such as drinking water in the fields. This has been possible so far due to the marginal position of the agricultural labour force and the lack of any organized protest by it. The government of British Columbia has played an important role in the development of present relations of production by keeping the farm labour force excluded from various labour legislations. This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
Working And Living Conditions In The Mainland District Farms

There has been some change in the working and living conditions as a consequence of the struggles waged by the B.C. farmworkers in the last few years. However, regardless of all the promises made by the Social Credit government no significant change has taken place (CFU, n.d.). Due to growing economic hardships and ever increasing unemployment in the province, even farmwork has taken on new importance. Fewer people are willing to risk their job in demanding more wages or better living and working conditions. This will allow these conditions to remain intact for the near future if not for long. This section will deal with these conditions in some detail, for they were the very reasons for which the Canadian Farmworkers Movement began at the end of the 1970s.

Farmwork in British Columbia is seasonal. A large number of workers are needed during peak harvesting season. A majority of these workers is recruited by farm contractors from Vancouver and surrounding communities. Many come on their own from other smaller communities around the province such as Prince Rupert, Williams Lake, Port Alberni, and so on. These migrant farmworkers stay in the cabins provided by the farmers for the duration of the season. A small number of workers are recruited through Canada Farm Labour Pools - a farm employment agency funded by the federal government.

The contractors recruit and transport daily a large number of workers to and from the fields from Vancouver and the surrounding communities. The overcrowded and generally unsafe
travelling conditions provided by the contractors have caused serious injuries and even deaths in some cases (CFU, n.d.). Despite the dangerous situation, the stringent traffic laws of the province were rarely enforced as far as these vehicles were concerned. The seating arrangement in these vehicles amounts to three two-by-twelve boards running from the driver's seat to the back of the van: two boards on the sides and one in the middle. The discomfort of sitting on these boards multiplied due to overcrowding.11

These workers leave their city homes early in the morning and are brought back late at night during harvesting season. In many cases they spend 14 to 16 hours away from their homes; yet receive pay only for the actual time spent in the fields. For the women farmworkers this means an even longer day since they have to cook meals for the entire family both in the morning and then again at night.

As mentioned earlier not all workers travel to work on the fields. A considerable number of people come from other communities of the province and some even out of the province such as from Edmonton and Calgary which now have a growing number of Indo-Canadian people. These migratory workers live in the "housing" provided by farmers for the duration of the harvesting season. These cabins or shacks often consist of converted barn stalls and dilapidated outbuildings12.

The conditions of "housing" available to farmworkers have been fully outlined in the media. The issue received wider attention due to a tragic incident which occurred on a Matsqui farm on July 16, 1980. Sukhdeep Madhar, a seven-month old baby, drowned in a bucket of drinking water after rolling off a
bunk-bed. The water was kept in the bucket because there was no running water in the converted horse-stall where the infant’s mother was living. There was an outcry from the public (Vancouver Sun, Aug.20, 1980:A12).

The response from the authorities have been to pass the buck to the next level. After the above incident and under public pressure the Matsqui building inspector closed the horse-barn but said, “the onus for permits is on the farm owners” (Province, Aug.22, 1980:A4). Earnest Templeton, Matsqui District Assistant Fire Commissioner had investigated the place for a propane permit a year earlier but assumed that the building permit must have been already acquired by the owner. Templeton justified himself: “You gotta use some common sense in these things. If we closed all the (substandard) berry cabins that are probably out there, where would they live?” And he added, “We’ve got 88 square miles to cover here. How can we know about all of them” (Ibid.).

The coroner’s jury after its investigation, made a number of recommendations, asking among other things that legislation be “immediately initiated”, empowering the Ministry of Health to establish minimum living conditions for farm labour (Ibid.).

Following this incident a task force was established by the Matsqui District Council. In a report to a committee of council Matsqui director of planning Paul Mortz said:

The conditions observed included extreme fire hazard, overcrowding, use of highly flammable panelling, cubicle bunks blocking of windows, poor ventilation, inadequate toilet facilities, propane cooking rings in each cubicle which are more dangerous than a communal kitchen, and leaking roofs. (Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, April 29, 1981:3).

Another aspect about these dwellings which made things
worse was that while farmworkers were made to pay rent by by receiving a cut in their pay the farmers gave the impression that they were letting them stay there free of charge. The point was illustrated in the following newspaper report:

Farmers often supply “housing” for pickers during the season. In most cases one eight-by-ten cabin houses three or four pickers, or husband/wife team and their children. The farmers pay these pickers 20 cents per flat less than the rate given to workers bussed in each morning. These shacks - usually without running water, adequate cooking facilities, and no toilets - cost each picker upto $120 per month - in lost “wages”. The farmer can pocket up to $480 per month “rent” for each unit. (Vancouver Sun, Aug. 25, 1980:5)

Despite the accidents and public outcry the buck still get passed around - the question of which ministry is responsible remained. Inspection procedure established had no practicality in as far as the situation of farmers’ cabins were concerned. A proper inspection could only be made after a complaint has been lodged. For fear of losing their jobs and place to stay no farmworker could dare to file a complain.

The CFU has been arguing that the government need not create new regulations for farm housing. It pointed out that the existing “Industrial Camp” regulations should apply to farm housing as it applies to other workers in isolated environments. But the government has continuously ignored these arguments. According to the B.C. Human Rights Committee Report on domestic workers and farmworkers:

We have “industrial Camp Regulations” passed in 1946 as part of the provincial Health Act that are effectively never enforced. The result is housing conditions for farm labourers that were likened to “Nazi concentration camps” by the coroner investigating the drowning death of a seven-month-old baby. (B.C. Human Rights Commission, 1983)
Working Conditions

The conditions under which farmworkers have to work rate no better than their living or travelling conditions. Farmwork is hard physical labour which has to be performed in hostile weather conditions. Hand harvesting berries and vegetables involve stooping, plucking and toting. In the fields there is no protection from hot sun or cold rain even during the break periods. At the fields even such basic facilities as drinking water or toilets have not been available. Workers often had to walk a long way in order to relieve themselves.

In recent years after widespread agitation by the CFU some farmers tried to improve the situation by providing drinking water and portable toilets, but to a large extent the conditions remain unchanged. It is understandable that due to the nature of agriculture some aspects of farmwork are unalterable, but the disturbing fact is that the farmers, by using this as an excuse, have been refusing to provide even the basic facilities which could have been easily provided under most circumstances.

Besides being physically hard, farmwork presents a lot of dangers for the worker. It is considered to be the third most dangerous occupation (Vancouver Sun, Aug. 25, 1980: F8). It affects the health of the worker in many different ways. According to some studies done in the USA the stoop labour incapacitates workers within 10 to 15 years (Terry, 1980). A Saskatchewan study shows that farmworkers have a much greater incidence of poor hearing, speech defects, respiratory diseases and back problems than the general population (Reason, Ross and Paterson,
Despite all this, no regulations exist to monitor farm accidents in B.C. Using information from Provincial Department of Vital Statistics, Calvin Sandborn compiled a report showing that at least 64 workers died in farm related accidents between 1976 and 1980 (quoted in Vancouver Sun, Aug.31, 1981:4). And these figures did not include transportation accidents involving farm labour or long-term occupational diseases. It is estimated that in Ontario, one worker per week is killed performing farmwork (Jhappan, 1983:50).

Until recently, B.C. farmworkers were not covered by Workers' Compensation even though they were involved in a highly dangerous occupation. Finally they were brought under the coverage of WCB as a result of a long agitation on the part of the CFU. However, still no regulations were established to enforce the protective measures. The Social Credit government turned back on its promises on this issue a number of times (CFU, n.d.). The role of the government in connection with the agricultural industry is discussed under a separate section in the next chapter.

The agricultural labour force had historically been the victim of discriminatory treatment. The FWOC and later the CFU constantly agitated to have the agricultural labour included under protective labour legislations. Consequently the Social Credit government introduced The Employment Standards Act 1980 which was supposed to correct the situation by setting minimum standards for all workers in the province. But the regulations introduced a year later were hardly enough to change the situation. Section 3(4) of the Regulations specified minimum
piece-rates for a range of fourteen crops, but denied the minimum hourly rates to "farmworkers who are employed on a piece-work basis to hand-harvest fruit, vegetables and berry crops" (B.C. Government, 1981: section 3). The Regulations also excluded farmworkers from other major provisions including hours of work legislation, child labour laws, termination of employment, and holiday provisions (Ibid.:section 9).

From farmworkers' point of view the most damaging aspect of these Regulations is the continuity of "piece-rate" - a system of payment according to productivity. The employers in the agricultural industry have convinced the government by arguing that this system works best for them and at the same time it provides incentive for the workers and with hard work they can earn more than the minimum wage. On behalf of the farmworkers the CFU argued that the system was unfair because the conditions of work vary with many things such as the time of the harvesting season. If at one time a worker could pick more "flats" and earn above the minimum wage, at other times in the same season when the crop is thin the same worker could end up making less than a dollar an hour. The average pay for an average worker may come to well below the minimum wage (Interview with Chouhan, October 21, 1983).

The Act made no provisions for overtime for farmworkers (B.C., 1981:section 9). During the peak season a farmworker's day could be more than 12 hours of labour in the fields, but unlike workers in other places he is not entitled to any overtime payment.

The new Act did not change child labour practices in B.C.'s agricultural industry. An estimated five hundreded children
accompany their mothers to the fields and most are forced to work to boost immigrant families' income (Chouhan quoted in the *Vancouver Sun*, Aug. 25, 1980:5). While no daycare facilities exist in the farms, farmworkers are unable to afford those that might be available in cities like Vancouver. These young children face numerous health hazards in the fields. A striking example of this was the death of three boys by drowning. This tragic incident occurred in July 1980 when three young boys aged 8, 9 and 10 drowned in an Aldergrove gravel pit while their parents worked in a field nearby (*Vancouver Sun*, July 26, 1980:4). What might have a grave and long lasting effect on the health of many of these children is their exposure to dangerous pesticides in the open fields, the subject of the next section of this study.

Farmwork And Pesticides

The farmworkers exclusion from the compulsory Workers Compensation coverage have much more serious implications when the issue of pesticides enters the picture. The dangers presented by the indiscriminate use of pesticides in the agricultural industry in B.C. makes farmwork an even more dangerous occupation than mining and logging (*Jhappan, op.cit.*, 1981). Pesticides are no longer used just to kill insects, but also to kill birds, fungus, rodents, fish and plants (CFU, n.d.). Chemicals which are used to control the growth of crops can have both acute and chronic health effects on humans. Acute effects include everything from skin rashes, dizziness and vomiting to paralysis and, in some cases even death. Chronic effects include liver damage, cancer and the birth of still-born or deformed children (*Sandborn and*
The use of pesticide in B.C. is largely uncontrolled (CFU, n.d.). The profit oriented farmers are easily convinced by the highly sophisticated and persuasive techniques of the pesticide industry that without these chemical aids they would suffer heavy crop losses (Ibid.). B.C. farmers are growing more and more dependent on the use of pesticides, as demonstrated by a three-fold jump in the quantity used between 1967 and 1977 (Ibid.). Large quantities of toxic substances are dumped over the fields, with apparently little or no regard for their effects on the workers (Sandborn and Dean, op.cit.:2). Farmers in B.C. are not required by law to post signs that name the chemicals and state a safe re-entry date (Ibid.). In addition, as a result of the farmworkers' exclusion from mandatory Workers' Compensation coverage, there are no safety inspections on the vast majority of farms to regulate spraying and its health effects on the workers (Ibid.). A fact finding team reported:

British Columbia farmworkers have reported incidents where farmworkers had pesticides dumped directly on them from the air, and incidents where farmworkers' tent and cooking facilities were directly sprayed with pesticides. Great numbers of B.C. farmworkers have reported experiences of some sort of pesticide-related symptoms: boils, swelling, unexplained headaches, and nausea. (Ibid.)

A more disturbing fact is that most of the farmers in British Columbia themselves seem to be ignorant about the safe use of these chemicals.

The dangers presented by pesticides have not only been pointed out by the CFU and its supporters, many experts in the field have also repeatedly warned against them. According to Dr. Eric Young, chairman of the B.C. Medical Association's
environmental health committee, “a study by two Vancouver cancer researchers shows that a higher-than-normal ratio of farmworkers die from cancer of the stomach, liver, prostrate and lymph glands... it was reasonable to assume the diseases were caused by pesticides” (Quoted in the *Vancouver Sun*, March 16, 1983).

Pesticides and other health hazards have already taken many lives which could have been saved through preventive measures. One example is the death of Jarnail Singh Deol on October 3rd 1982. Deol, a twenty year old farmworker, died as a result of pesticide poisoning at a farm in Surrey, B.C. Deol’s death was labelled homicide by the jury which said that “had proper pesticide handling been practiced, this incident could have been prevented” (*Vancouver Sun*, March 17, 1983:A3). Previous to his death Deol was admitted to hospital three times in September. Five other workers from the same farm were treated for similar symptoms - nausea, sweating and clammy skin. According to Dr. Bill Meekinson, Director of the Boundary Health Unit in Surrey, these symptoms were the result of gradual and incremental poisoning over a long period (*Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 3, 1982:3).

Following Deol’s death a number of organizations including CFU, called for an investigation into the incident. One such call came from the Vancouver and District Labour Council which urged B.C. to institute regulations to control the use of pesticides.

As the discussion in this chapter has shown the danger arising from pesticides is only a part of the overall unsafe working conditions in the agriculture industry of B.C. Before exploring these conditions the structure of the industry itself was examined which seem to be the cause of many of these problems in the industry. For a variety of reasons the agricultural
industry in B.C. has largely avoided land concentration, it has not mechanized to the same levels as have other industries. This structure has direct implications for the labour involved in this sector. These implications have been partly explored in this chapter. The labour process which arises as a result of this structure and differs from other sectors will be explored in the next chapter. Also under discussion will be the forces which have played an important role in maintaining the existing structure.
Notes to Chapter III

1. Unless otherwise stated, the main sources of data used in this chapter are 1971 and 1981 censuses of Canada:


2. This table was prepared with contributions from Dr. Hari Sharma.


4. Ibid. Computed from Table 12.

5. Ibid. Computed from Tables 12

6. Ibid. Computed from Table 3-1.

7. Ibid. Computed from Table 35-1.

8. Ibid. Computed from Table 26-3.


10. The following definition of a “marginal” work force is offered by Leggett: “The Marginal working class refers to a sub-community of workers who belong to a subordinate ethnic or racial group... evidenced by their large concentration in marginal occupational positions... almost all of them are economically insecure”. John C. Leggett, Class. Race and Labor. (Oxford, 1968) pp.14-15.

11. On different occasions I have talked to a number of farmworkers who travel with different contractors. They all describe similar conditions. In addition I have myself on three
different occasions travelled with different contractors in their vans and found workers account to be quite accurate.

12.

I have visited farmworkers' cabins in the Abbotsford and Clearbrook area many times during the last few years. Mainly due to the public pressure created by the CFU since the death of a seven year old girl in 1980, many farmers have either built new cabins or have upgraded the old ones. The conditions are not nearly as bad as they were few years ago.
Chapter Four

THE MARGINALITY OF LABOUR IN B.C.'S AGRICULTURE

The economic profile of British Columbia's agriculture presented in the last chapter shows that farmers rely heavily on cheap labour. This requirement is fulfilled by a section of the labour force which, due to its vulnerability, is distinguishable from the mainstream workforce. It is a marginal work force. The marginality of the agricultural labour force has two aspects. One, it is marginal as much as agriculture in a fully developed capitalist society like that of Canada is marginal. The second aspect is its ethnicity.

The ethnic factor adds another dimension to it - the dimension of racism. The question of race is not only a concern at the work site, but also involves the agricultural work force as a whole. For instance, this sector has traditionally been excluded from protective labour legislation in B.C. Since the state is responsible for this, it plays a direct role in keeping this labour force marginal and easily exploitable. Since all this happens in the midst of a highly organized labour force in other sectors of the economy, the situation makes the organized labour movement, if not directly responsible, at least deeply concerned for the unorganized.

Due to the structure of the industry - the work is not only seasonal, it has lean and peak periods during a season - its labour needs are characteristically different from other industries. Combined, the seasonal aspect and the ethnic makeup of the workforce create conditions that require a different labour process. Consequently, most of the workers are recruited
by labour contractors, further adding to the marginality of this labour force. The above mentioned aspects of the agricultural labour and the resulting labour process will be the focus of this chapter.

Farm Labour Process

The climate of British Columbia allows only a few months of growing season each year, and most of the work force is needed only for a short period of time. Even during the season, there are variations in demand for labour. A large number of workers is a vital necessity for the industry to survive during the harvesting period. Any shortage or delay during this crucial period can seriously destroy crops and consequently harm the industry. This creates a certain kind of urgency, and therefore an absolute dependency on a guaranteed pool of labour at the needed time.

This structure compels the agricultural sector to adopt a peculiar mode of labour recruitment in which capital and labour do not always confront each other directly. There are three different methods of labour recruitment utilized by the agricultural industry in B.C. First is the labour contract system, second, through the federally funded Farm Labour Pools, and the third method is to employ transient workers - workers who migrate to the work site for the duration of the work season.

In the Mainland District most of the farmworkers are recruited by the labour contract system which first came into use in California farms in the last century. Since the agricultural industry, both in California and B.C., recruits new immigrants -
the most vulnerable part of the labour force - one of the main functions of the contractor from the beginning was that of interpreting. Originally introduced by the Chinese, the system was used by the Japanese, East Indians, Mexicans, German-Russians and Italians (Fisher, 1960:23). In the present context the function of these contractors has changed considerably. A farm labour contractor now "hires, supervises, pays the workers, and does all the bookkeeping for the farmer. He gets the job, provides transportation, for a fee, and if necessary translates for the worker" (Vancouver Free Press, June 29, 1979:13).

Until recently, contractors in B.C. were under no legal restraints or regulations. Combined with the exclusion of farm labour from labour legislation, discussed in the last chapter, the contractors were free to impose their will on the farmworkers. Some changes were introduced in 1982 by which the contractors were required to obtain licenses and deposit bonds. However, since these regulations were not strictly policed, it is quite possible that they were not being properly obeyed. Due to an increase in the number of labour contractors the business has become competitive and they have to cheat on the bond requirements as well as exploit the workers to the maximum. According to one contractor, "See what the contractors are doing - they would pay bond only for 25 people which is $5,000, but will take as many as 100, or 200 people (Interview with Kishan Walia, October 23, 1985).

A majority of the contractors in the Mainland District are Punjabis from the Indo-Canadian community, except for a small number of Chinese who provided labour mainly to Chinese owned farms in Richmond and Aldergrove. Punjabi contractors recruited
and transported labour from Vancouver and surrounding communities to farms in Langley, Clearbrook, Abbotsford, Chilliwack and other farming communities in the area. Most of these contractors had a reputation of mistreating farmworkers, which became one of the triggering factors in the beginning of the latter's struggle. Though things changed somewhat in this respect, there still remained a strong distrust and disrespect among contractors towards farmworkers. In an interview, this is how a contractor expressed his feelings:

If you treat them with respect and look after them every way you can, they start to suspect you. They think you must be after something. They don't have any respect for the nice guys... You know there are contractors who are well known for cheating, rough handling, and even sexually exploiting women workers, everybody knows about them, but still they have more workers than they can handle. Every body likes to go with them.

There are a number of reasons why workers kept going back to the contractors even after being abused. The main reasons were structural. For example, UIC regulations compelled workers to stay with one contractor for the entire season. A majority of the farmworkers often did not have resources and time during the season to go and try other employers. But there was another important aspect which had a serious effect on the workers' decisions to stay with contractors who mistreated them. That aspect was the strong regional and kinship ties which continued from Punjab. The close relatives of a contractor, or people from the same village were usually treated better, but even if they weren't, they still preferred to stick with "their own". The religious and feudal values were also utilized to control and keep workers coming back.

The contractors devised a number of other methods to keep
the workers under their control. One such method was to withhold their pay till the end of the season. Since there were no legal restrictions the contractors paid the workers at the end of the season and in many cases they refused to pay altogether. Recovering this unpaid money from contractors was the starting point for the Farm Workers Organizing Committee in 1979. (Interview with Mahil, August 30, 1985)

The second method of labour recruitment is through a federal employment agency, the Canada Farm Labour Pool, set up in 1974 specifically for the agricultural industry. Theoretically these agencies were established as negotiators between farmers and farmworkers. But from most farmworkers' point of view the pool mainly looked after the needs of farmers. According to the Farm Workers Organizing Committee:

The Canada Farm Labour Pool, a government-funded agency whose motto is “Farmers Helping Farmers.” This agency, which has close links with the farm owners and clearly serves their interests, pretends to mediate between the interests of the owners and the workers. (FWOC, n.d.)

The third method of labour recruitment is the use of transitory labour. A number of different groups of farmworkers migrate each season to B.C. farms. In the Okanagan region, workers from the province of Quebec come each year to pick fruit. And there is a sprinkling of students and other transient workers who make their way to B.C. farms in every region. In the Mainland District, workers, mostly Punjabi immigrants, came to work in the farms from other smaller communities around the province. These workers, often whole families including small children, stayed in the cabins provided by farmers for the duration of the season. The farmer had full control over these workers because they lived
in "houses" provided by him. A woman farmworker, interviewed for this project said that the farmer not only was able to put them to work on his own farm but he could also lend them to other farmers (Interview with Bachan Kour, September 19, 1985). Farmers had very effective control over the workers' lives. Although no "barbed wire" existed and no overt policing was done, the farmers usually took necessary precautions to make sure that workers in these cabins had no contact with the organizers. CFU had to wage a long court battle in order to get access to these cabins and was granted conditional access (CFU, 1982). While the farmers charged rent for these cabins by taking a cut from the piece-rate, the workers were told that they lived "free" and therefore they should be grateful for this and obey the farmer. As mentioned in the last chapter, the issue of these cabins' conditions has been an ongoing concern of the farmworkers' struggle.

Composition Of The Farm Labour Force

The labour force involved in the agricultural sector is largely marginal. This marginality, as mentioned earlier, is defined by two different aspects: the seasonal and transitory character of the labour force and its ethnic makeup.

The first aspect is due to the structure of the agricultural industry. Since farmwork is seasonal, the labour force is reconstituted each year. Each season there are changes in the composition of the work force, especially at the level of each employer. It is extremely difficult for workers to have any kind of group feeling or solidarity among themselves. In this
situation it is not easy to make demands for better working conditions or higher wages. In the absence of any class struggle, employers in this industry are under no compulsion to invest capital in new machinery and to generally rationalize their operations. Combined with the "natural obstacles", discussed in the last chapter, the capitalist structure in the agricultural sector remain relatively less developed and consequently, marginal to the rest of the economy.

Corresponding to its own marginality, the agricultural industry in Canada, in general, and in B.C. in particular, has traditionally drawn labour from the weakest and most vulnerable portions of the work force. Natives, and newly arrived immigrants have been the main sources of labour for this industry. They are easier to control, willing to do shift work and willing to work with obsolete and hazardous equipment. Though the following quotation does not have direct application for the present discussion it does give a general idea about the use of Third World immigrant labour in the industrialized nations:

Immigrants usually occupy vacant workplaces and housing, and their presence does not require additional expenditures by the government or private capital. ... In short, the possibility of repatriation, together with the below-average demands of immigrants, generally exempts the economy from the need to build the kinds of infrastructure and service organizations that would be required by an equal number of national workers. (Sassen-Koob, 1981:29)

Currently, labour in B.C.'s agriculture is mainly drawn from the Asian ethnic groups. In the Mainland District out of an estimated 20,000 farmworkers (1985/1986 figures), 80% are Punjabis, and over 15% are Chinese, Vietnamese and Laotian immigrants (CFU, n.d.). These are the people who, for a variety
of reasons, have little choice but to work in sectors like the farm industry. And work they must, because being new immigrants they are generally under a lot of economic pressures. On the one hand, they need to establish themselves in the new land, and on the other, they might have to repay the loans undertaken for travel from the old country.

Many immigrants who first work in the fields eventually find employment in other sectors, as did the earlier generations of the immigrants. But the continuous flow of immigrants from these Asian countries maintains the pool of marginalized labour.

New immigrants are forced to take up farmwork partly because of lack of skills and language. This is especially true for Punjabi women farmworkers. Those who can speak even a little English eventually find other manual jobs in the city, such as dishwashing, and janitorial work, which are preferable to farmwork not only for higher wages, but also for better working conditions, and greater permanence.

The fact that they are non-whites adds to their marginality. Institutionalized racism in Canada, particularly in the very competitive job market, is well documented. As a consequence, it takes longer for immigrants from non-white countries to find other employment and move away from the agricultural sector. With high unemployment in the other sectors, for some it becomes difficult to leave this sector at all.

The number of Punjabi farmworkers have been steadily increasing since the beginning of the 1970s. A brief look into their background will be useful for the purpose of this study. A vast majority of the Punjabi immigrants to B.C., and to Canada as a whole, came from a peasant background. Punjab became a part of
the British Empire in 1848. After the annexation, the British imposed taxes on land creating the need for farmers to acquire cash in order to pay the taxes. This pushed the peasants into the hands of money lenders (Josh, 1977:33). The process changed the structure of Punjabi villages and many peasants lost their land to the money lenders. According to one observer:

The land on which they were making their poor living had passed into the hands of the rich peasant and “banya sahukars” (money lenders). There was no employment for the peasant youth except enrolling themselves as military recruits in the British Army. But this employment brought them at the risk of their lives a paltry sum of nine or ten rupees per month, which could hardly keep the wolf from their doors. (Ibid.)

To add to all this, there was a series of monsoon failures between 1905 and 1910. The result was famine in the region. However, this famine was manmade rather than natural. While Indians were dying of starvation and disease the British were exporting food worth millions of dollars. In the four year period from 1911 to 1914, over 28 million people died from lack of food and during the same period the food exported by the colonial government amounted to 476 million dollars (Ibid:34). Such were the conditions in India at the turn of the century which created a surplus labour by expelling people off land with no prospect of local employment. The only choice was to either join the army or leave home in search of work. Along with some retired soldiers, a number of these peasants ended up in British Columbia.

Though until the late 1960s the Canadian government blocked immigration from India, economic conditions in India continued to create surplus labour. With the easing of the Canadian immigration policies in the sixties a large number of people from the Punjab made their way into B.C. and other parts
of Canada. Although these immigrants have had no previous experience with working class struggles, they were no strangers to struggles in general. A majority of the Punjabi immigrants belong to the Sikh religion. As Sikhs they have always struggled for their minority rights in India. As peasants, they have struggled against the state for better prices for their produce (Sharma, 1983:59). In general Punjabis had been in the forefront of popular struggles in India, whether it was against British colonial powers or against landlord and bourgeois ruling classes.

This tradition of struggling for their rights was the main source of inspiration for the farmworkers who lacked trade union ideology and experience in working class struggles. The lack of trade union experience and the general vulnerable condition of farmworkers posed many difficulties in the organizing efforts. These difficulties were been multiplied by the fact that most of the immigrants from the Punjab came from a very small region. Consequently there exist strong close connections, family ties, real and fictive kinship, and so on. All these social factors helped labour contractors to effectively control the labour force.

International Division Of Labour

The vulnerable situation of the Punjabi farmworkers, though quite desperate, is not an isolated case. They are part of a new division of labour which is a global phenomenon known as the international division of labour. The following is a brief discussion about this phenomenon which is the outcome of capitalist development at the world level.
Human labour is the source of all wealth produced in the world. Historically the organization of labour has taken many different forms, ranging from slavery and serfdom to wage labour. It has gone through radical changes in the modern capitalist system, which creates huge surplus labour through various means. This surplus labour is the source of migration from one nation to the other. It has become another form of exchange between nations and is transferred like raw materials or capital.

In practical terms whenever the fully industrialized countries need labour, the needed numbers are allowed in from the non-industrialized poor nations, usually belonging to the third world. Much attention has been paid by theoreticians to the explanation of this new flow of labour. The prominent development has been towards an approach which is called "the world system". Among others, Wallerstein (1979), Petras (1980, 1981), Portes (1981) and O'Connor (1981) have developed this approach. According to Petras the world system is a "hierarchical system of production unified by an international division of labour" (1981:45). In a world whose economic system is one unified entity, the industrialized nations control capital and are called "core" states and those less developed nations, which have a relation of dependency to the core, are called "periphery" states. As a response to the needs of the world economic system, a new division of labour at the international level has taken place. Harry Braverman discusses this process of internationalization of labour:

...These masses are thrown off by the process of imperialist penetration itself, which has disrupted the traditional forms of labour and subsistence. They become available to capital as its own agricultural surplus labour (that part of the relative surplus population which Marx called
"latent" portion) is used up. As a result of this, the movement of labour has to some extent become internationalized, although still regulated in each country by government action in an attempt to make it conform to the national needs of capital. Thus Western Europe and the United States now draw upon a labour reservoir which extends in a broad land from India and Pakistan in the East across Northern Africa and Southern most Europe all the way to Caribbean and other portions of Latin America in the West. (Braverman, 1974: 384-385)

The surplus labour in the less developed countries is used by the developed countries, both in the periphery and in the core states. The modern era is the era of multi-national corporations which originate from the core and control much of the industry in the periphery as well. Multi-national corporations do not always import labour, they move their plants to wherever cheap labour and raw materials are available. They have the advantage of exploiting a working class which is still largely unorganized, due to the developmental stages of those countries. On the other hand, the working classes in fully industrialized countries are largely organized and through long and hard class struggle have won many rights and privileges. Consequently, the working class in the core states enjoy a relatively high standard of living and demand higher wages and safe working conditions regardless of the type of work. But as we have seen earlier, even in the fully developed countries, certain sectors such as agriculture remain capitalized only to a limited extent, relying more heavily on the large-scale import of living labour. Consequently, the agricultural sector tries to use marginal labour which does not enjoy comparable wages and other benefits. Due to the existence of the welfare state - also the result of long and hard class struggle - in most capitalist countries even unemployed workers refused to take jobs in sectors like agriculture. The only
solution for such industries is to draw labour from sources in the periphery. These immigrants, for a number of reasons already discussed, fill these positions without much protest.

In this new system of organization of labour power at the global level, race and color play an important role as a dividing category among the working class. What was seen as the "danger of imperialism" by Lenin (1973: 126) has proven to be correct. The process has already taken place. The division of labour based on race and colour is a reality today. The globe itself reflects the situation of South Africa and has been called "Global Apartheid". According to one recent view:

...the affluent white minority possesses a disproportionately large share of world society's political, economic, and military power. Global apartheid is thus a structure of extreme inequality in cultural, racial, social, political, economic, military and legal terms as is South African apartheid.(Kohler, 1978:4)

The question of the usage of race and colour in dividing the working class has been further explored in recent studies, according to which people of certain races and colors are placed in situations where they must do low paying menial and unskilled jobs. Oppenheimer, who calls these workers the subproletariat, explains the role color plays:

...throughout the Western world the subproletariat correlates closely with populations that are dark-skinned, and that the work engaged in by the subproletariat is regarded by that particular society at that particular moment as the least desirable, the "dirtiest".(Oppenheimer, 1974:7)

In addition to being hard, unpleasant and even "dirty", these jobs "seldom offer chances of advancement... are usually performed in an unstructural work environment and involve an informal, highly personalistic relationship between supervisor
and subordinate (Piore, 1979:19).

The reasons for the migration, social situation and employment of the Punjabi workers in B.C.'s agricultural industry can be best explained by the above approach. With exceptions, they do jobs which are often not desired by white Canadians. A large number of them work as farm labourers in the Fraser Valley. There is high percentage of Punjabi workers in janitorial work, domestic work, dishwashing in hotels and restaurants, taxi-driving, railroad work, and so on. While white workers often stay away from most of these jobs, new immigrants, for a number of reasons already discussed, fill these positions without much protest. The state plays an important role in immigration legislations and to keep these workers in a marginal position. The next section deals with the role of the state.

Role Of The State

According to Marx, "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels, 1978:475) This crude sounding statement contains considerable truth. There are many instances in capitalist countries such as Canada, where the state manages and protects the interests of the bourgeoisie. For example, the government of B.C. and of other provinces, traditionally acted to help the employers to recruit the needed labour at the required time. This has also been true for the employers in the agricultural sector, where the state had played two major roles: to make sure that the agricultural industry has a ready access to cheap labour and to ensure that the labour force in agriculture
remains inexpensive and docile.

To ensure that there was enough cheap agricultural labour available, the state occasionally took specific steps for this purpose. A simple look at the history of immigration policies concerning non-white workers’ entry reveals how the state accommodated the needs of the industry. For example, in the first decade of this century a $500 head tax was imposed on Chinese immigrants to stop their flow. It resulted in a drop from 4,719 Chinese immigrants in one year to only 8 in the next. As an immediate consequence of this, there was a shortage of cheap labour for farmers, cannery owners, and domestic help for the rich. These sections of the bourgeoisie protested to the state and the state allowed a large number of immigrants from India to fill the gap created by the Chinese. (Sandborn, 1982)

The state has always recognized the agricultural industry’s need for cheap labour. Often there is a basic understanding between the state and the employers. Sometimes this view is explicitly expressed as was done by Norman Levi, the Minister of Human Resources in 1974. In a letter written to B.C. Federation of Agriculture Levi said, “I do have, as indeed the rest of the government does, a very real concern about making available a pool of labour to the farming industry” (Levi, 1974).

To facilitate the day-to-day needs of the industry, the Federal Government operates the Canada Farm Labour Pools in the agricultural communities across Canada. They were established in 1974 because the farmers were not getting the kind of help they wanted from the local Canada Employment and Immigration Centres (Interview with Andy Sidhu, October 2, 1985).

The other major role that the state plays is to make,
certain that the labour remains inexpensive and docile. Considering historically the composition of the agricultural work force and the treatment given to it, it is not altogether incorrect to conclude that this work force has been racially discriminated against. It has been a form of institutionalized racism, where a whole sector has been excluded from protective labour legislation.

The state may not be a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie in the strictest sense, but it is clear from the discussion above that it plays a definite role that favours the bourgeoisie over the working class. A recent example from the situation in B.C. can again be used as evidence. After a lot of public pressure created by the efforts of FWOC and CFU, the government was forced to bring farmworkers under the legislative protections. But at the same time the pressure from the farmers' lobby was such that the government again excluded farmworkers employed on a piece-work basis from the new Employment Standards Act, 1981. And also it continued to refuse to bring in regulations needed to enforce Workers' Compensation coverage and other health and safety related matters, especially concerning the use of pesticides in agriculture. (CFU, n.d.)

Role Of The Organized Labour Movement

The British Columbia government has historically been successful in supporting the agricultural growers in their efforts to prevent farm labour from demanding better wages and working conditions by excluding them from protective provincial labour legislations. On the other hand, due to the seasonal
aspect of the agricultural industry and the transient nature of the work force it has been difficult for the labour movement to organize and bring farm labour to the same standards enjoyed by its membership.

Labour in the agricultural sector, like other sectors that include low paying physically hard jobs, has never been a stable force. People from various different ethnic groups at different times have worked in the farms and then moved on to better paying jobs in other sectors. In more recent times, however, it has become stable in the sense that a majority of farmworkers are continuously drawn from one ethnic group, Indo-Canadians. As discussed earlier in the chapter, these new immigrants are part of a new migration of labour and are intentionally allowed in to do specific jobs, which include farmwork. With many individuals coming back each season to work in farms, protest against working conditions began to take root.

Once the work force directly involved in agriculture started to take notice of their conditions and expressed the desire to change them, the organized labor movement quickly responded with support. Their protest coincided with the change in the Labour Code which allowed them the right to organize themselves into a labour union. The response of the labour movement in the Mainland District was different from an earlier response in the Peace River Region of B.C. There, an already established union - local 9-686 of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union - helped a group of farmworkers, mainly college students, to organize and made them a part of the local (Clarke, 1977:260). In the Mainland District, the labour movement did not get into organizing farmworkers itself, instead
it provided help for the growing protest to take shape into a new union. The International Woodworkers of America became the initial link between the farmworkers and the labour movement. (Int. Mahil, op.cit.)

The difficult task of organizing farmworkers has been appreciated by all levels of the organized labour movement across Canada. CFU representatives have been invited to speak at the national conventions of Canadian Labor Congress. Furthermore, they have been given standing ovations on more than one occasion for their efforts. The CLC has been the major source of financial aid to the CFU as well.

Similarly other levels of organized labour, the provincial organizations, district labour councils and numerous local unions have actively supported the farmworkers' struggle. Even though the organizing efforts of the CFU have not been very fruitful in the recent past, the support from labour has grown rather than lessened. This was clearly visible at the last benefit held by the CFU in October of 1985. More than 500 people from other unions attended the event. A number of local labour leaders, including Art Kube, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, expressed continued support on behalf of their organizations. Also present was Cesar Chavez, the President of United Farm Workers of America, who has supported the cause from the beginning.

This continued support is an indication of a deep understanding, on the part of the organized labour movement, of numerous difficulties involved in organizing farmworkers. The objective conditions in the agricultural sector that necessitated the farmworkers' protest in spite of numerous obstacles have been
the subject of this as well as the last chapter. These chapters have also provided a framework in which the farmworkers' movement arose. The next chapter retraces the origin and development of the movement.
Notes to Chapter IV

1. The number of contractors varies each season and even during a season. At the peak of the season their numbers are higher. For the 1985 season, according to one contractor there were seventy contractors operating in the Fraser Valley (Interview with Kishan Walia, October 23, 1985). And according to Andy Sidhu of Canada Farm Labour Pool, there were fifty-five (Interview with Andy Sidhu, October 2, 1985).

2. A number of farmworkers filed their complaints against contractors and farmers through LARA (Labour Advocacy Research Association) which was set up by B.C. Lawyers to help farmworkers and domestic workers.

3. A small contractor who operated only during the peak of the season with one van. Interviewed September 15, 1984, at his home in Vancouver. He refused to give permission to use his name.


5. The number of Punjabi farmworkers in B.C. grew rapidly from fewer than 500 in 1979 to an estimated 2500 by the summer of 1974 (Jakhu, 1974:2).

6. The developers of the "World System" approach have divided the world in two main camps "core" or "center" states and "periphery" states. See Immanuel Wallerstein, The Capitalist World-Economy. (Cambridge: University Press, 1979); Amin Samir, Imperialism and Unequal Development. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977). According to Samir Amin the difference between "center" and "periphery" is that capitalist relations in the center developed as a result of internal processes, whereas capitalist relations in the periphery were introduced from outside.
Chapter Five

THE FORMATION OF THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION

The objective conditions of British Columbia's agricultural industry, already described in previous chapters, had existed for a long time. No known record of protest on the part of farmworkers since the Second World War exists. Even the struggles of the California farmworkers during 1960s which caught the imagination of the whole world and made Cesar Chavez a household word failed to ignite any fires here. Farmworkers, mainly newly arrived immigrants, were generally ignorant about their rights and had no organization to fight on their behalf. The general public was even more ignorant about the existence of farmworkers and the conditions under which they worked. This was borne out by the response of total shock and surprise by British Columbians when farmworkers' conditions were made known to them.

However, not only did the labour force in the agricultural sector finally protest against their relatively harsh working conditions, they did it in a big way. The farmworkers' protest did not, in fact could not, limit itself to simply asking for economic parity with the other workers. They had to fight against the attitudes and policies that had kept them excluded from the province's labour legislation. They had to fight against institutionalized racism which had victimized them for a long time. This chapter will trace the development of the farmworkers' protest from its inception. A number of important questions need consideration. What precipitated the protest to begin with? What were the goals? Who were some of the target enemies? Who were the participants? How and when did the protest become a social...
The Protest Begins: FWOC Is Born

Occasional news of the farmworkers' plight began to appear in the newspapers when the New Democratic Party government set up a Select Standing Committee on Labour and Justice to investigate the problems faced by agricultural and domestic labour in 1973 (Vancouver Sun, November 1, 1974:3 and the Province, April 11, 1975:32). But such events merely remained news items, without generating any concern in the larger public. It was only after the Farm Workers Organizing Committee (FWOC) was formed in February 1979 which began mobilizing in support of the farmworkers' conditions that the issue became a public concern.

In a public meeting called to discuss the farmworkers' problems, FWOC chairman Raj Chouhan charged that the farmworkers in the Fraser Valley were treated as "slaves" (Vancouver Express April 11, 1979:1). In response to these charges an inquiry was announced by Labour Minister Allan Williams. The probe order came at the request of Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Vander Zalm, who agreed with the Committee's charges and said that "he is aware that his constituency - Surrey - is one of several areas where 'slave traders' are active" (Columbian, April 11, 1979:1). The FWOC organizers charged back that the Sacred government had known about "intolerable conditions for farmworkers" since 1975 when the Select Standing Committee reported its findings (Vancouver Express, op.cit:2) and the announced inquiry was "a ploy for votes in the May 10 provincial election" (Columbian April 17, 1979:2). Allan Williams, the Labour Minister, had to
defend his position publicly. With this controversy, the farmworkers issue became an "exciting" news item for the media. It was covered across Canada by major newspapers, radio stations and television networks. For example, the Montreal Star wrote a detailed article with a headline reading: "Slave Labour in the Fraser Valley" (Montreal Star, May 5, 1979: News & Review section). The farmworkers' issue becoming national news was an unprecedented event in Canadian history, and the credit deservedly went to the FWOC.

Since a large number of Punjabis, a majority within the Indo-Canadian community, were involved in the agricultural industry, the problems faced by the farmworkers were an ongoing issue for the community long before the general public became aware of them. Though these problems were frequently discussed by members in general, the mainstream political leadership within the Indo-Canadian community did not pay much attention to it. Even if one assumes that a sense of resentment against the prevailing conditions, as well as a desire for some change, were shared by all the farmworkers and by the community at large, these feelings remained separate and isolated. They could become a force only if they became unified. Particular experiences needed to become general concerns. For this transformation to occur, there was a need for some kind of a body, an organizational vehicle. Furthermore, it was not simply a matter of universalizing particular experiences and resentments, and the scattered feelings of a need for change. The direction, orientation and the ultimate objective of change had to be clearly understood too. A clear and realistic assessment would have to be made if the objective was to be realizable within the
given framework of existing societal forces. What tactics and concrete actions would have to be followed was also an important consideration. In other words, an organized body of people with capable leadership was an essential prerequisite before even widespread feelings of resentment and the desire for change could be activated in a collective protest.

With the dramatic increase in the Indo-Canadian population in B.C. and Canada during the late sixties and early seventies, a new political atmosphere had begun to emerge in the community. For the first time in many decades - since the days of the Gadar Party in the 1920s - the community saw the emergence of groups of politically oriented and socially conscious people. Issues of racism and discrimination began to appear in the form of organized protests. The farmworkers' issue was eventually taken up by one of these new political organizations - the Indian Peoples' Association in North America (IPANA). Formed in 1975, this organization had units across North America. It also had links with left-oriented political organizations in India. More importantly, it had established close contacts with working class organizations and other progressive sections of people in the larger society. These links played a significant role in the development of the farmworkers' struggle.

The first step to bring up the issue of farmworkers to the public did not, in fact, come from IPANA. Already in 1978, the Labour Advocacy Research Association (LARA) - an organization set up in Vancouver by the B.C. Law Union to help farmworkers and domestic labour - had begun to intervene in the situation by taking up complaints of workers against the contractors or employers. Once a few farmworkers came out in the open with their
problems a whole set of forces came into motion. John Borst, the coordinator of LARA, who had earlier worked with the United Farmworkers in the U.S., guided these workers to seek the help of organized labour. He helped set up the initial meeting with the president of International Woodworkers of America's (IWA) New Westminster, B.C. Local. The meeting also included Harinder Mahil, the editor of the IWA newspaper from the same local. Mahil, also an active member of IPANA, recollects Borst's reasons for contacting his local: "a significant percentage of East Indian workers are members of this local and it is their relatives and family members who were working in the farms" (Interview with Harinder Mahil, August 30, 1985).

After the initial meeting, a process of discussions and meetings began. It mainly involved some IPANA members and farmworkers. Raj Chouhan, another IPANA member, who was to play a significant role in the struggle later, became a very active participant in these discussions which mostly centered around defining the problems and determining the appropriate actions. The number of participants, both farmworkers and concerned individuals from the Punjabi community, was increasing. During one such meeting more than sixty people saw and discussed a film about the farmworkers' struggles in California. A core of people had clearly begun to emerge in the leadership positions. These included some known activists of IPANA as well as some other unattached individuals. Representatives from trade unions also attended some of these meetings and promised support for the cause (Ibid.). Encouraged by the growing interest, the emerging core of leadership decided on February 25, 1979 to organize the Farm Workers' Organizing Committee (FWOC). The public
announcement of this organization was made in a meeting held on April 8, 1979 in the Carpenters' Hall in New Westminster in B.C. Close to 400 people participated in the day long deliberations and more than 200 farmworkers became members of the new organization which was headed by Raj Chouhan.

The Goals And The Targets Of The FWOC

The immediate task of the newly formed Committee was to help farmworkers collect their unpaid wages and resolve UIC problems, especially since the funding for LARA was soon to expire (Gill, 1983:23). In addition, the Committee leadership realized that in order to convince and bring large numbers of the farmworkers into the struggle, it had to show a real concern for their day to day problems.

The Committee began this task of helping farmworkers with their problems by taking over the cases from LARA (Ibid.). At the same time it was involved in deciding who its target enemies were, what its goals were, and how it was going to achieve those goals.

There was no difficulty in identifying the goals that the Committee wanted to achieve. In his speech at the first public meeting the FWOC President said that “the objectives of the Committee are to organize farmworkers to fight for better wages and working conditions. The long-term objective of the Committee is to create an organization of farmworkers, that will defend their rights.” These goals were further elaborated in an article by the Committee Secretary Charan Gill.

The similarity in the ethnic background of farmworkers,
contracts and a growing number of farmers posed many difficulties in organizing. As discussed earlier, farmworkers as new immigrants were in a very vulnerable position, and the Punjabi background of the contractors and the farmers made their situation even more vulnerable. The contractors and the farmers were able to use many of the religious and cultural values of their peasant background to their own advantage. For example, the farmworkers would not see the farmers and contractors as their employers. Rather they were seen as old acquaintances and would not press them for the payment of backwages and other demands. The farmers and contractors always use the regional ties from the old country to keep control on the farmworkers. Religion has also been used for these purposes. For example, instead of paying wages on time at the end of a season, a contractor would invite all workers to a religious ceremony and consequently establish himself as a very honest and a pious person in their eyes. This would allow him to keep the unpaid wages for a longer period of time because the farmworkers would not press him too hard for their money. These religious feelings and regional ties make it very difficult for newly arrived farmworkers to go against a contractor or a farmer. It prevents them from openly complaining against the employers and also from joining organizations such as a union which take a stand against those employers.

Consequently, farmworkers were very reluctant to come forward to join the struggle. The Committee had to devise new tactics to overcome this cultural hurdle. The result was the decision to take the issue to the public. In other words, the decision was made to make it a high profile public issue which would take away the fear felt by the workers in isolation.
According to one activist, "the organizers realized quite early that unless a high profile of the struggle existed, the farmworkers would not join" (Int. Mahil, op.cit.).

The government of British Columbia, farm labour contractors, and farmers were the three target enemies identified by the Committee. The difficulty was to set priorities. The contractors were involved in the most direct exploitation of the farmworkers. The Committee recognized this fact in one of their briefs presented to the B.C. Labour Minister Jack Heinrich:

Many of the worst abuses in the farm labour scene arise in the farm labour contracting situation...The contractor keeps at least 33% of the money paid by the farmer. Too often contractors cheat and refuse to pay at all. In addition, they routinely transport workers in dangerously overcrowded and unsafe vehicles (FWOC, 1980:14).

In this sense an urgent focus on the contract labour system was very much needed if immediate economic gains for the farmworkers were to be realized. But the Committee recognized the difficulty in organizing farmworkers immediately against the contractors due to the former's economic dependency upon the latter, as well as the many social bonds which existed between them. Moreover it was clearly recognized that instead of going primarily after particular contractors or farmers, much more was to be gained by targeting the whole legal-institutional system which made the exploitative conditions possible. The labour policies of the B.C. government thus became the primary target.

As one member of the FWOC said, "the B.C. government was directly responsible for the existing exploitative conditions in the agricultural industry and only a legislative change could bring about structural transformation" (Int. Mahil, op.cit.).

As far as the farmers were concerned, the FWOC in the very
initial stage recognized the importance of not alienating the numerically large category of small land-holders. As we shall see subsequently, one of the first major job actions the FWOC organized, with a large amount of publicity, was against a very large farmer in the valley. It was therefore necessary to alleviate the anxiety small farmers would feel. Chouhan, the Committee President, made the following comments in one of his earlier speeches:

We know that most of the small farmers are generally sympathetic to the cause of farmworkers. They are themselves struggling hard to draw a livelihood. We would like to assure all small farmers that the struggle of farmworkers is for a just cause and the realization of their demands will not be ultimately against the interest of small farmers.8

With all these considerations in mind the Committee called its first public meeting on April 8, 1979, where it charged the B.C. government with discriminating against the agricultural labour force in the province. Retrospectively, it seems that they could not have picked a better time. This was exactly one month before the provincial election was to take place. Consequently, the Labour Minister Allan Williams was drawn into an open discussion with the FWOC, which helped to make the farmworkers issue a high profile one.

The Movement Participants

When the issue received media attention, the general response of the larger community was one of shock and anger over the treatment of B.C.'s farmworkers. This proved helpful for the Farm Workers Organizing Committee. In response to its call for
help people from a variety of different backgrounds came forward.

The supporters of the farmworkers' struggle can be placed in two main groups: direct beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Included in the first group are the farmworkers and the organizers (not including volunteer organizers) and the second group includes sympathizers who came from a variety of different backgrounds such as trade union members, political activists, students, lawyers, professors, artists and many others. The following is a discussion about these participants - both individuals and organizations, their backgrounds and their reasons for participating.

Though the FWOC was looking for support from wherever possible, its main focus was to enrol as many farmworkers as would join. The widespread publicity which the FWOC was able to achieve soon after its emergence as well as the concerted efforts on the part of many organizers and volunteers instantly brought a good response. Over a thousand farmworkers joined the Committee within the first few months (FWOC, n.d.).

The above figure, though encouraging, represented only a small portion of the total farmworker population of the province, which numbered more than 8,000 at the time. Even those who had become members did not fully participate in protest activities. There were some very practical difficulties. For example, many of the farmworkers did not drive, while others lived in farmers' cabins and could not come out because of the threat of losing their jobs and places to live. Given the circumstances and the vulnerability of their situation, to become a FWOC member was a daring step for most of them. In addition to the more general difficulties faced by a marginal labour force, the farmworkers
lacked direct experience in working class struggles, as discussed in the last chapter.

However, many did become members and participated in marches and demonstrations. There have been some memorable incidents where farmworkers defied the employers and joined the struggle. One such incident is remembered by many participants. Terry Glavin, a news reporter who wrote extensive stories in the *Columbian* on farmworkers' struggles and who has since been on the staff of the *Vancouver Sun*, describes the experience in an interview:

I remember that large march through the Abbotsford area. There were farmworkers working in the fields and at one point when the march passed by them, and I remember some workers left the field and joined the march. That was a very happy thing - that is something that stands up in my mind (Interview with Terry Glavin, August 12, 1985).

Though the number of farmworkers who directly participated throughout the years has been small, still they were the backbone of the movement. Had they not become members in such large numbers in the most crucial period - the beginning of the movement - it may not have developed at the pace that it did.

Second to the farmworkers themselves, the members of the trade union movement were most significant participants in the struggle. The support received from the trade unions in general and from some individual members in particular gave a tremendous boost to the struggle.

The IWA, as noted earlier, became the farmworkers' initial contact with organized labour. Gerry Stoney, the then President of the New Westminster IWA Local came to many meetings and expressed solidarity in the initial stage of the struggle. Both Harinder Mahil and Raj Chouhan were members of this local and
were encouraged by their union to take an active part in the farmworkers' struggle. This local provided, on numerous occasions, the place to hold meetings for farmworkers.

Many well known leaders from the labour movement also gave support. People like Jean Claude Parrot, President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and Art Kube, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, many times publically raised the issue. Mr. Kube claims that he has been a staunch supporter of the farmworkers struggle since its beginning:

I was the education adviser (during 1979/1980 period) with B.C. Federation of Labour. But even then I was very concerned about the farmworkers issue and have actively supported the farmworkers all along. I was instrumental in getting the financial support from the CLC for the CFU. (Interview with Art Kube, December 18, 1985)

However this passion for the farmworkers was only awakened after the conditions were brought to light by the efforts of the FWOC. Mr. Kube admits that:

Like other people, we in the trade union movement were not fully aware of the working and living conditions of farmworkers. Everybody thought that farmwork was a family business, where no outside labour is used. For us the farmworkers were the seasonal fruit pickers in the Okanagan Valley. Yes we were actually surprised to find that such conditions existed. (Ibid.)

This may have been the very reason the farmworkers received such overwhelming support from the trade-union movement. It seems that its members felt genuine guilt for ignoring the farmworkers. Quoting Terry Glavin, the news reporter, again, “The existence of the CFU, reminds the rest of the labour movement that there are serious struggles to be fought and won. The CFU is like guilty conscience” (Int. Glavin, op.cit.).

Both the Canadian Labour Congress and The Confederation of
Canadian Unions — national organizations of labour in Canada — supported the farmworkers’ struggle. It was the CLC which became the major source of funding for organizing farmworkers. According to Mahil the financial support from the CLC came even without asking, "the CLC representative came to CFU’s founding meeting and announced they were going to give $40,000 dollars for organizing farmworkers (Int. Mahil, op.cit.)."

Many other unions gave financial and other support. Notable was a $10,000 grant from the British Columbia Government Employees Union. Others sent in regular small donations. Some locals donated office equipment and other needed help (Ibid.). The individual members from many unions volunteered their time and skills. The assistance from trade unions was particularly noticeable at many fund raising events organized by the CFU.

Help from the trade unions was not limited to Canada only. The internationally acclaimed leader Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers of America was a strong supporter of the struggle. He made a number of visits to B.C. and on more than one occasion walked the picket line with striking CFU members.

After its formation the immediate need of the FWOC was to help farmworkers recover their unpaid wages. Since many of these cases had to be fought in the courts, this task required the skills of trained lawyers. Neither the Committee nor farmworkers had sufficient funds to pay for these services. This help was provided, free of charge in most instances, by a group of lawyers from the B.C. Law Union10.

The support these lawyers provided was essential at the initial stage of the struggle to build a relationship of trust with the workers. Assured by these individuals, the committee was
able to announce:

If you have any problems to recover your wages, problems with UIC claims or problems at work, approach us. We'll be in a position to provide free legal and other assistance in these matters.

In addition to their help in handling farmworkers' legal cases, the lawyers also provided invaluable legal advice at crucial times of decision making. For example, during many marches and demonstrations they were always at hand to advise the farmworkers about their legal rights. Furthermore, they were also instrumental in creating most of the legal documents for the movement from short briefs to the drafting of the constitution of the Union. For example Calvin Sandborn, while still a law student at UBC, prepared a brief for the FWOC on the general conditions of farmwork, which was presented to the provincial government (Interview with Calvin Sandborn, October 24, 1985).

Not only did they help the struggle in its initial stages, but the lawyers' help became even more crucial later. After the Farmworkers Union was formed and the struggles for the union's rights for certifications and for contract negotiations began, the lawyers became involved in lengthy Labour Relations Board hearings and other court cases on numerous occasions. Their services played an essential role in the development and survival of the struggle.

There were many other community groups and individuals who provided assistance to the farmworkers struggle. For example, IPANA (Indian Peoples' Association in North America) as mentioned earlier, was not only instrumental in initiating the struggle, it was a constant source of support. Two of its members devoted their full attention to the struggle while others were always
there at the times of public rallies and picketing.

Through its units IPANA was also instrumental in spreading the word about the farmworkers' efforts in other big centres, both in Canada and the United States. The struggle was well received by the working class in general, but particularly so by the Indo-Canadian people in these centers. As a result, after seventy years Vancouver once again became a center of struggle for the East Indian population in North America.

Various other organizations active in political and social issues, made important contributions toward building and sustaining the movement. These were the Workers' Communist Party (WCP) in Struggle, Men Against Rapes, British Columbia Organization to Fight Racism (BCOFR), India Mahila Association, Samanta and others. Individuals from these various groups devoted much energy and time to the struggle. However help from these various organizations with different ideologies and aims occasionally created problems for the CFU. The organizers had to deal with these problems tactfully. According to Charan Gill, the Secretary of the FWOC, the organizers sometimes found themselves "soft pedalling certain areas depending on what group they were addressing" (Gill, op. cit. :22).

A number of support groups developed at various university campuses and small townships across Canada from Port Alberni on the Vancouver Island to Montreal. Along with the media and the units of IPANA, they were influential in making the farmworkers issue a national concern in Canada. The members of these support groups were not able to physically participate in the more active aspects of the struggle but their contribution was of no less value. They were a constant source of moral and financial help.
More than anything else, these groups gave the struggle a much wider and national profile. Occasionally, they would invite representatives from the CFU. Following is a good example of this broader interaction:

Some 40 McGill students ended the fall term with a show of support for the Canadian Farmworkers Union by attending a benefit for the CFU December 5. Mobilized by the campus group McGill for Farmworkers, they were among the 250 people who heard Raj Chouhan, president of the CFU and Jean Claude Parrot, president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. (The McGill Daily, January 8, 1981:2)

More than $1,000 dollars were raised at the benefit mentioned above. Since the majority of the farmworkers were from a newly arrived and widely misunderstood ethnic minority the existence of support groups in far away places did much more than help in the struggle, it also gave farmworkers a sense of belonging to Canada.

Out of all the support groups formed across Canada the one at Simon Fraser University was most helpful, mainly due to the hard work of a number of students and faculty, but also because of its proximity to the Mainland Region, the site of the farmworkers' struggles. On a number of occasions they organized showings of "A Time To Rise", the documentary film made about Fraser Valley farmworkers' struggles, and invited CFU people to the campus. In addition to their activities on the campus, they took part in most of the major activities organized by the CFU. Similarly during CFU's two strikes, people from SFU volunteered their time to stand on the picket lines. Laurie White, a former student at SFU, talks about her involvement:

When the strike was happening at Naam, and because I lived close by I spent a lot of time on the picket line after school and on weekends. I have
done quite a bit of photography and stuff like that for the union. Also I used to do some work at the office from time to time. I think I attended all the demonstrations. So I did those kind of things along with participating in activities organized by the support committee at the campus. (Interview with Laurie White, September 16, 1985)

Along with these various support groups and other organizations a number of individual artists and cultural groups, both from the Indo-Canadian community and the larger community, came forward to help the farmworkers struggle. The well known labour song writer and singer Utah Phillips appeared at CFU functions. A group of Punjabi folk dancers organized by Paul Binning was always a part of the attraction at public meetings and benefit functions held by the FWOC and later by the CFU. (Jackson, 1985:13)

The documentary "A Time To Rise", which has been extensively used in day-to-day organizing efforts, was made by two sympathetic film makers - Anand Patwardhan and Jim Monroe. Helped by a grant from the National Film Board of Canada the 45 minute film portrays the conditions of farm labour in B.C. as well as the many aspects of the struggle. Judy Cavanagh, who as a staff person and organizer of the CFU had shown the film to "hundreds of different groups" felt that the film "was caught in a very good time". She did not have to explain too much to people because the film "graphically said a hell of a lot more than what I could do". (Interview with Judy Cavanagh, November 17, 1985)

It was the involvement of these various organizations and individuals from different walks of life which made the farmworkers struggle much more than a trade union organizing attempt. The leadership recognized the necessity of public pressure to bring any change in the working and living conditions
in B.C.'s agricultural industry. The general mobilization was directed towards the government which was held responsible for existing conditions in the industry. The next section deals with the process of collective mobilization in the farmworkers movement.

Mass Mobilization: Meetings, Demonstrations, Marches, Petitions...

The Farm Workers Organizing Committee recognized the difficulties in organizing a marginal labour force in a marginal economic sector. The Committee decided to mobilize farmworkers as well as the general public against the conditions in the entire industry instead of fighting against individual farmers and contractors. The Committee's decision to take the issue to the general public was also based on its understanding that due to its marginal character, the labour force would be more willing to join a high profile movement than an isolated struggle. The farmworkers movement in California also provided a good model for the Committee. The UFW had scored many victories by mobilizing the general public in support of farmworkers' issues. The Committee leadership was hopeful that they would be able to copy the UFW's successes by creating strong public opinion. In comparison, they felt that their task was easier in B.C. because there were no big corporations to stop them (Interview with Raj Chouhan, October 21, 1983).

The FWOC began its campaign by holding public meetings. The media coverage of its very first meeting, not only introduced the issue to the general public but brought response from the
government as well. The next important meeting was held on May 13, 1979 at Mission, B.C., in the heart of the farming industry. Close to 400 people, the majority of whom were farmworkers, came and listened to speeches from various labour leaders. The main purpose of this meeting, according to the Committee President, "was to see the response from farmworkers". The theme that ran through various speeches and presentations at this meeting was "farmworkers are workers too".

The FWOC organized its first large meeting in Vancouver on June 11, 1979 at David Thompson Secondary School. The meeting, titled "Farmworkers Conference", was addressed among others by IWA President Jack Munroe and CUPW Vancouver Local President Lloyd Ingram. A prominent labour lawyer Stuart Rush gave a report about the case against Doug McKim, a Richmond farmer who was refusing to pay farmworkers their back wages which amounted to $31,000. Rush told the meeting that the farmer had promised to pay five adults $3.50 an hour and two teenagers $3 an hour for picking, weeding, planting and digging fruits and vegetables in 1978. According to Rush:

Nachatter Singh Sidhu and his family worked diligently and faithfully from March to November...but McKim didn't pay. He had one excuse after another. He said it would be coming one week or the following week but here we are in June, 1979 and he still hasn't paid. (Vancouver Express, June 11, 1979:A3)

This case, which received publicity due to the efforts of the Committee, was not an isolated one. There were numerous others sometimes involving individual workers but often entire families as in the case of the above Sidhu family.

The Committee continued to hold meetings. One was held in the Abbotsford farming area in the Airport Hall, only a few yards
away from the strawberry and raspberry fields. Close to 300 people, mostly farmworkers, attended.

Besides holding meetings, the Committee opened a small office in Burnaby B.C. during that harvesting season. The number of people regularly devoting time to organizing efforts grew to five. In addition to Raj Chouhan, Harinder Mahil and Charan Gill, two new volunteers, Sarwan Boal and Judy Cavanagh joined the committee, making it a much stronger and determined force. Cavanagh, a graduate of Simon Fraser University's Sociology Department, brought with her years of experience in student activism as well as some very needed administrative and office skills. Boal being a politically conscious, educated, Punjabi young man, had much to offer in the way of actual organizing among farmworkers.

The number of farmworkers contacting the Committee regarding their problems increased considerably. The number of farmworkers becoming members of the Committee was also slowly but steadily increasing. Then, suddenly an important event took place which gave the Committee an immense popularity among farmworkers and dramatically increased its membership from 300 to 1000 in a short time.

The incident involved Mukhtiar Singh, the owner of Mukhtiar Growers Ltd, who employed more than 300 workers during the berry picking season. In his reaction to the activities of the FWOC leadership he had gone on record calling them "dumb bastards" and had said that their "hearts were set on high paying union positions. They wanted to become big-shot union bosses with lots of money" (Vancouver Express, June 22, 1979:1). Two weeks later he held back $100,000 dollars in back wages and repeatedly
refused to pay. Workers took their complaint to the FWOC. According to Chouhan, "Some farmworkers came to us complaining that they had not been paid for the past six weeks". The job action produced dramatic results. Within an hour after the picket line went up, the farmer agreed to pay $80,000 dollars to the workers. Not only did he pay right on the spot, he apologized for his remarks:

Singh apologized to about 25 Farm Workers Organizing Committee members and 200 workers who gathered at his Abbotsford farm Tuesday to protest a remark including a reference to "dumb bastards". (the Province, July 18, 1979:3)

The Committee organizers who had led the strike action themselves distributed the back pay money among the farmworkers. There were jubilation and loud cheers, and all this happened in front of T.V. cameras.

This was the first mass job action by the FWOC. It opened up new possibilities for organizing and gave the Committee more recognition and respectability. This is what the Committee Secretary had to say about the incident:

It's a major victory for the farmworkers, in terms of getting back wages and in terms of getting farmers to recognize the Farm Workers Organizing Committee. (Vancouver Sun, July 18, 1979:B14)

The organizers had good reasons to feel excited. The victory had created positive feelings among farmworkers and they were signing up in large numbers. Many workers were also excited about it, for it was a totally new experience for them. "It was the first time that a number of farmworkers felt enough at ease to speak up and really participate", observed Committee President Chouhan. They carried placards, shouted slogans and felt a sense of power as a result of workers' unity. Many proudly
carried signs reading, "We Want Wages Every Two Weeks", "We are Workers not Dumb Bastards" and "We Want Proper Toilet Facilities and Fresh Drinking Water". (Vancouver Sun, July 18, 1979: B14).

The fact that the first major job action undertaken by the FWOC was targeted against a big farmer who happened to be an Indo-Canadian was significant. This demonstrated that the farmworkers' struggle for union rights and better working conditions was not a struggle of one ethnic group against another. It was a class struggle.

The farmers and contractors felt threatened at the growing popularity of the FWOC which followed this widely publicized event. In response they held their own meetings and defended the labour contract system (The Chilliwack Progress, May 18, 1979: 4). Some even went further and in retaliation began to make threatening remarks against the FWOC leadership. The Committee President received threatening phone calls. According to him the farmers and contractors spread rumors that if a "member of the organizing committee got killed, nobody would be talking about organizing a union" (Vancouver Sun, August 27, 1979: 2). In order to show that they could not be easily intimidated, the Committee organized a demonstration in the Abbotsford's farming area. On August 26, 1979, more than a hundreded people marched through the fields while chanting slogans such as "workers unite" and "workers fight" (Ibid.). This was the first demonstration organized by the FWOC. More were to follow.

Meanwhile a petition had been started. Despite the promises, the government was taking no active step to change the legal status of the agricultural labor force. To create additional public pressure the committee launched a petition in
August, 1979, demanding expanded labour standards legislation to cover farmworkers and domestic servants. More than 15,000 signatures were collected in the following ten weeks.

The petition was personally handed to Premier Bennett in Vancouver on Saturday November 3rd, 1979 while the Social Credit Party was holding its convention. The FWOC organized a demonstration in downtown Vancouver. Close to 350 people - farmworkers and supporters - gathered for a rally on the steps of the old courthouse. After the rally, they marched down West Georgia to Burrard and then to Melville Street in front of the Hyatt Regency Hotel where the convention was being held. Both the Premier and the Labour Minister came out of their meeting to accept the petition. The Premier had to promise in front of the slogan chanting crowd that something will be done in the next couple of days. (Columbian, November 5, 1979:2)

An immediate response was produced by the petition. The following Monday the FWOC received a call from the Ministry of Labour. A meeting was set up for the next day in Burnaby. Raj Chouhan, President, Charan Gill, Secretary and Carolyn McKool, a member of the B.C. Law Union, met the Deputy Labour Minister. The Deputy Minister repeated Mr. Williams' statement which had said:

Quite frankly I am surprised they're taking this position because my officials have never been approached by this group, and this group should be able to make constructive suggestions for the improvement of the lot of farmworkers in a legislative way. (Vancouver Sun, November 5, 1979:A14)

The Committee's answer was that they had not approached the Minister because he had known about the conditions since 1975 as documented by the Select Standing Committee. The meeting concluded with the agreement that the government would consider
suggestions from the FWOC when it introduced new legislation the following summer.

A brief was prepared and presented to the Labour Ministry on February 23, 1980, which outlined the existing conditions and made concrete suggestions for legislative protection. In view of the previous performances of the Sacred government, the committee put in a strong word as warning:

There can be no more excuses. The 11,000 farmworkers of British Columbia demand the same legislative protection that other workers have. The workers who feed this province with stoop labour and sweat will no longer accept the status of second-class workers. The Farm Workers Organizing Committee calls upon the Government of British Columbia to recognize a simple principle: that farmworkers are workers, and should be equal, before the law, to all other workers. (FWOC, 1980:1)

The FWOC had been in existence close to a year and with hard work had brought the farmworkers’ issue to the attention of the whole nation. A large number of meetings, marches, rallies, court actions, strike actions and many other activities constantly kept it in the media. The Committee was successful not only in creating public opinion for farmworkers’ issues; it mobilized a large number of people and organizations as well. The collective mobilization and various actions organized by the committee gave the struggle characteristics of a wider social movement rather than a simple trade union organizing activity.

The direction taken by the farmworkers’ struggles was, it seems, acceptable to the participants who joined the movement at later stages. One participant who had prior experience organizing workers in other industries observed:

Well, right from the beginning it was clear that you could not organize farmworkers in the same way as you organize workers in other industries in a traditional manner, largely because of the
conditions involved. Myself, I didn't see any way of organizing. So when the strategy came to build a sort of social movement, it made a lot of sense. (Interview with Mike Fleming, August 14, 1985)

What made the social movement characteristic of the farmworkers struggle much stronger and more convincing was the involvement of the FWOC in other social issues and struggles. Unlike most trade unions it did not shy away from taking supportive stands on various political and social issues. Reciprocally its involvement in community issues made it a much stronger movement.

The Canadian Farmworkers Union

After one year of organized agitation on the part of the FWOC, the government that had historically ignored the workers in the agricultural sector was now forced to listen to their grievances. On the other hand the leading organizers and supporters of the Committee felt that unless there existed a recognized union, their efforts might be a waste of time in the long run. According to Judy Cavanagh, a long term activist in the FWOC and CFU:

People thought that without a union there is no clout, nobody really has to listen to the association. They don't have to pay any attention whatsoever to the association. With the union we will have a legal structure, a code, a constitution that will put some framework in and then we will have a recourse if you are trying to enforce contracts and do something else. (Int. Cavanagh, op. cit.)

The decision to form a union was finally made in early 1980. On April 6, 1980 the Canadian Farmworkers Union was formed
In a meeting held in the Carpenters' Hall in New Westminster, B.C., Raj Chouhan was elected president of the union. Other officers elected were: Jwala Singh Grewal, vice president; Charan Gill, secretary; Sarwan Boal, treasurer. In his speech, the president spoke about the importance of the union for the farmworkers:

For the farmworkers the achievement of a union will mean an end to the long history of being the most underpaid and exploited section of the Canadian workers, of being denied the status of workers, of being denied human dignity, of being unable to carry on organized struggle of their rights as workers.

Not only will the union be able to phase out the labor contractor who is greatly responsible for the oppression of the farm worker, but it will enable the farmworker to wage successful struggles for legal protection and better working conditions. *(Vancouver Sun, April 7, 1980:4)*

He also talked about making it a truly Canadian union representing all farmworkers not only in B.C., in the rest of the country as well. "We hope to organize throughout Canada, as there are hundreds of thousands of farmworkers in Canada" *(Ibid.)*.

Solidarity with the rest of the working class was strongly emphasized at the founding meeting. The message from organized labour was also one of solidarity. Bill Small, the Regional Director for the Canadian Labour Congress spoke at the meeting and pledged $40,000 to continue the struggle *(Ibid.)*.

Among other speakers, the regional president of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Don Garcia said that by forming the union they were "making history". He added a word of caution and support: "You are about to enter an era when things will become much more complicated. You should know that you do have the help of the rest of the labor movement". *(Columbian, April 7, 1980:1)*
The CFU continued the momentum built by various activities of the FWOC. A large number of people were mobilized to come to a public rally held in Vancouver to celebrate the formation of the CFU. Along with other labor leaders, the well-known California leader Cesar Chavez, President of the United Farm Workers of America, also attended this meeting and pledged his union's support to the Canadian farmworkers. While he told the struggling farmworkers that "nothing comes easy, progress means struggle and sacrifice", he strongly warned B.C. growers:

Negotiate with the Canadian Farmworkers now or you are going to make the same mistake the growers made in California, and you will see what organizing really is. Don't feel sorry for us. Negotiate. There is no way you can turn the clock back. Accept and understand that the Canadian Farmworkers Union is here for good, here to stay and be successful. (Columbian, April 28, 1980:A3)

Soon after the formation of the CFU, the actual union organizing in the Fraser Valley fields became a part of organizers' activities. The union at this point wanted to focus its organizing efforts on the seasonal workers only. Judy Cavanagh explained, "we started with seasonal workers and that was the only way we were going to go. We did not even think about year round workers" (Int. Cavanagh, op.cit.).

But to their surprise, the first call the union received for help was from mushroom workers: a year round operation. Consequently, the CFU "accidently got thrown into organizing the year round workers" (Ibid.). The call came from workers at Jensen Mushroom Farm in Langley. Although the majority of the workers on this farm were Punjabi women there were also several white male workers. Following is a list of some of the problems faced by the workers at this plant, as they were expressed in an interview
published in a Punjabi language magazine:

1. There was no such thing as job security. Every time you made one little mistake the farmer threatened to fire you.
2. Sometime we would come to work at 8 in the morning and be finished by 9. We simply had to go home after one hour. At other times we start at 9 and continue working till 12 at night or even later till next morning. We would get no overtime. Often we had to work 6 to 7 hours straight without any breaks.
3. There was only one washroom for both male and female workers. The lunch room was so small that only a few could sit at lunch breaks, the rest had to eat while standing.

A majority of the 35 workers at the Jensen’s plant signed up for the union and the CFU applied for certification on May 30, 1980, and was certified by an historic Labour Relations Board decision on July 18, 1980. The farm owner contested the union’s application, arguing that CFU Local No.1 was not a bonafide union and that it did not represent a majority of Jensen’s employees. But the LRB ruled in the union’s favor. Jensen Mushroom Farm in Langley became the first farm in the country where a union was certified to represent the workers’ interests. Don Munroe, Chairman of the LRB, ruled that the CFU and CFU Local No.1 were bonafide unions, and added to his decision that the CFU “consists of committed people who have won the support of the labor movement for their cause”. (Chipper, August, 1980:2)

Two other certifications followed Jensen Mushroom Farm: Country Farms Natural Foods Ltd., and Bell Farms, both in Richmond. Reimer’s Nursery and the Fraser Vale Farms were two other important certifications won by the CFU in the next few months. The union began negotiating at all these farms following certifications.

Negotiations with Bell Farms in Richmond progressed
comparatively smoothly. As a result the first contract by the CFU was signed in November of the same year the union was formed. The significance of the event was echoed by the local newspaper:

Tuesday, November 18, at 11 a.m. The Canadian Farmworkers Union made Canadian history in signing the first labor contract ever written in Canada between farm workers and farm management, here in Richmond. (*Richmond Review*, November 21, 1980:1)

The contract included a wage increase, health and welfare benefits, workers compensation benefits, holidays, plus the establishment of a safety protection committee. In addition, the farm owner promised that all seasonal workers hired by Bell Farms would be hired through the union and not through a labor contractor.

The other negotiations did not go as smoothly as Bell Farms. The union was forced to set up a picket line at Richmond's Country Farm Natural Foods Ltd on April 9, 1981. On April 11, Cesar Chavez joined the picket line. He was in town on CFU's invitation to attend a fund raising dinner. His presence once again gave the workers and the union widespread publicity.

The owner of Country Farms also owned a restaurant in Vancouver. In response to his refusal to negotiate, the union started to picket his restaurant as well. The owner, instead of negotiating with the union, eventually sold his restaurant business and closed his alfalfa farm.

While the union was involved in the Richmond strike it was forced to start another in Langley. After nine months of exhausting talks with Jansen Mushroom Farms in which the owner was stalling, the union decided to take action. On the 14th of April, workers on this farm set up a picket line. They stood firm in the face of all kinds of harassment thrown at them by the
employer and his agents.

The picket line outside Jensen's Farm was a constant horror story. According to a news report which appeared a day after the strike began: "The President of the CFU and the daughter of the owner of a mushroom farm being struck by the union say they were assaulted by each other on the picket line" (Vancouver Sun, April 15, 1981:3). The picket line was marred by a number of other violent incidents including an effort to burn the union's trailer during the night.

The picket line remained active for months, twenty four hours a day. The farmer eventually decided to close his business completely. After 15 months of deadlock the owner finally gave in and signed the contract on July 30, 1982.

The CFU's picket lines had a very distinct characteristic. They were not picketed by the striking workers only. In a way, even the picket lines were an extension of the social movement aspect of the struggle. A large number of people from different sections of the society volunteered their time to walk the picket line.

Though the union's focus was on the Fraser Valley it was aware of the problems farmworkers were having in other parts of the province, as well as in other parts of the country. The fruit pickers in the Okanagan, the majority of whom come from the province of Quebec each year, were having a lot of problems. Sarwan Boal, Union Treasurer, spent a number of weeks during the summer of 1980, looking into the farmworkers' difficulties there. Boal told a reporter of the Penticton Herald what the union's intentions were in that area:

We are in the Okanagan to make the union better known. Our prime function is to find out about the
area and do as much research on the area as possible. We will be opening an organizing office in Kelowna sometime this year. (Penticton Herald, September 25, 1980:3)

Along with active organizing, the union leadership was active in spreading the word about the union and mobilizing support in other parts of the country. For example the CFU president made a long trip to Montreal and spoke at various gatherings. One such meeting he addressed was held at McGill University.

Contacts were also established with people actively organizing agricultural workers in Ontario and Manitoba. These links later became close working contacts and organizing in those areas was initiated. Both in Ontario and Manitoba local organizations affiliated with CFU were established and a number of delegates participated in the union's annual conventions.

Other activities were also undertaken. On June 18, 1980, CFU officials met Labour Minister Jack Heinrich to pressure the government for legislative change. A week later the union organized a huge demonstration at a farm in Fort Langley. The long procession marched on roads encircling the strawberry farm, shouting slogans which included "Zindabad", an Urdu word meaning "long live". The union claimed that the farm owner had failed to honor an agreement he had made with the union. Similarly on July 12, 1980, another large demonstration was organized, this time in the Abbotsford area. Over four hundred people participated in a long march through raspberry and strawberry fields.
Reaction To The Movement

When the farmworkers’ struggle started it was not taken seriously by many people, especially by farmers and contractors. The initial reaction according to Chouhan was: “At first, everybody thought we were just some organization making a fuss and making some noise and they thought we would disappear” (Vancouver Sun, March 17, 1986:A3).

Farmers and contractors interviewed for this study denied that they felt any threat from the organizing efforts in the Fraser Valley. Some Punjabi farmers were relatively more vocal and rude in their reactions. One such example was the incident discussed earlier, where Mukhtiar Singh, owner of Mukhtiar Growers Ltd said in a news report published in the Vancouver Express on June 22, 1979, that farmworkers were “dumb bastards” and the people trying to organize simply “want to become big-shot union bosses with a lots of money”(p.1).

Some suggested that the union was impossible because there is a very close relationship between the farmer and the farmworker. Mohinder Gill, President of the Fraser Valley Cole Crop Growers’ Association, explains it this way:

The farmworkers knew the situation of the farmers. You see, farmworkers and the farmer are like the sugar and the fly. The fly has to sit on the sugar to feed and the farmer is the sugar, you see. And sometimes the fly has to bring some sugar from outside to help the farmer. So we’re constantly together with each other you see and we’re working hand-in-hand with each other all the time. (Interview with Mohinder Gill, October 4, 1985)

A similar reaction came from the contractors: “They just want to take our business away. They want to make lots money from workers and the only way to do that is to get us out of the way”
The reactions from farmers and contractors were not limited to petty remarks against the organizers. They were also expressed in physical violence. Soon after the CFU was formed, the union office was damaged, along with damage done to a union official’s private property. The description appeared in the following report, published by B.C. Federation of Labour:

Twice before the founding convention, the offices of the fledgling union were vandalized by those who oppose them. Windows were smashed and considerable damage done to the offices... In addition to the attack on the office, the 1st vice-president of the CFU, Jwalia Singh Grewal, had his pickup truck, car and house vandalized in an attempt to intimidate him and get him to stop his efforts on behalf of farmworkers. (B.C. Fed. Labour News, June, 1980:2)

In spite of hostile remarks and cases of vandalism, a pattern evolved in the way farmers reacted. Many farmers, while claiming that in principle they did not reject the union, raised more familiar objections. Their concern was aired by Bill Richie, Social Credit MLA for the Central Fraser Valley. Richie said that organizing migrant farmworkers into a union would be a disaster. He said that “there has to be a better way for farmworkers to be treated fairly without joining a union”. Because unions, according to him, “don’t fit in with farming because farming is quite different from going to work with a lunch bucket everyday” (Vancouver Sun, August 9, 1979:2).

In reaction to the organizing activities, growers universally warned the workers that they would lose their jobs. “These guys are doing themselves out of jobs”, warned George Dreidiger, a Langley farm owner. “Next year”, he added, “it will be strictly raspberries and other crops that can be machine picked” (Province, June 29, 1980:A4).
Along with the threat of mechanization the farmers in the Mainland Region tried to bring in other minority workers. According to a news report, "a group of Fraser Valley farmers planned to set up a meeting of farmers interested in sponsoring Vietnamese refugee families to guarantee them housing and work in the fields" (Columbian, August 8, 1979:A7). In the same report the farmers were accused by Chouhan of using "a humanitarian mask to cover a most contemptible exploitative intention".

The extent to which growers were worried about the unionization of their farms become clear from the statement issued by the British Columbia Federation of Agriculture. It made a request to the government to make "farm labor an essential service". It also argued that:

Since outside agricultural workers now have the right to organize, any eventual strike action in certain agricultural industries could cripple and even destroy the productive capacity of that particular industry. Animals and highly perishable crops must be protected from the devastating effects that strike action could cause. (Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, December 12, 1979:3)

The growers had realized that there were going to be some changes in their industry. Oscar Austring, chairman of the Labor Council of the British Columbia Federation of Agriculture put it in straight language: "You are going to have to accept some form of labor legislation. You will not have it as easy as you have had it in past years" (Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, August 8, 1979:5).

The farming community in the Fraser Valley had traditionally supported the Social Credit government. They were constantly applying pressure on the government not to bring any drastic changes. The Social Credit Government had not disappointed the
controlling group in the farming industry. The legislative changes made in response to public outcry about the working and living conditions of farm labour in the Valley had a minimum effect.

Still the struggle of FWOC and CFU won many rights and benefits for the farmworkers as well as making significant political, social and cultural contributions to the society in general. A detailed discussion of these contributions follows in the next chapter. An examination of different phases that the movement went through in its short history will also be included in the next chapter.
Notes to Chapter V

1. These ideas were developed based on discussions with Dr. Hari Sharma.

2. In 1967 Canada moved towards a more even-handed immigration policy. Blatant special treatment of 'Asians' was removed from the regulations. Consequently a large number of immigrants from India arrived in Canada between 1967 and 1975. According to Buchignani (1977) the population in the Indo-Canadian community reached a total of 150,000 in 1975. Since then it has more than doubled.


4. Along with John Borst, Ujjal Dosanjh, a Punjabi lawyer and Nachater Dhahan, a young Punjabi woman who had recently graduated from SFU's Sociology Department were also active in LARA. Dosanjh also occasionally wrote in the local Punjabi media where he had discussed farmworkers issue as well.

5. From the speech delivered by the FWOC President Raj Chouhan in New Westminster, B.C. on April 8, 1979.

6. The FWOC secretary Charan Gill (1983:22) called these goals 'short-term goals, mid-term goals and long-term goals'. The short-term goals, according to him, were to help farmworkers collect unpaid wages and resolve UIC problems. Mid-term goals were to create public awareness and long-term objectives were to build links with the trade union movement.

7. Punjabi farmworkers have been reluctant to openly complain about their situation. The young and educated people who were part of this labour force in the early 1970s were eventually able to find employment in other sectors and because of their mobility didn't resort to any collective action while they were there. After establishing themselves they had sponsored their parents and younger brothers and sisters. Consequently, the majority of the farmworkers from 1976 onward were these new immigrants with very little knowledge of English. Coming from a peasant background they had no experience of working for wages. Like all new arrivals their reference group was not the Canadian workers but workers in Punjab. In addition, most of them, especially the women, perceived their income as a very insignificant part of the total family income. As a result they did not see their conditions as exploitative and miserable as they were seen by other more conscious members of the community.

9. It is very difficult to get one correct figure about the number of B.C. farmworkers at any given time. The figure often quoted in newspapers in early 1979 was between 7,000 and 8,000 (Columbian, April 19, 1979:A4).

10. A number of individual lawyers from the B.C. Law Union have helped the movement in its every phase and more than often they have done this work free of charge. This group included people like Stuart Rush, Carolynn McCool, Calvin Sandborn, Don Crane, Alan Mclain, Marilyn Koski and Patti Lane.


12. See Josh, op.cit.


15. Ibid.

16. Interview with two women mushroom pickers from the Jensen Farm in Langley. April 20, 1981.
Chapter Six

PHASES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS MOVEMENT

As we have seen in the last chapter the farmworkers struggle began with the formation of the FWOC in early 1979 and a year later became a bonafide trade union. Due to the objective conditions in the agricultural industry and a general down turn in the economy in the early 1980s, the CFU had difficulties becoming a financially self reliant trade union and barely survived. The organizers were involved in strikes, court cases and long and exhausting LRB proceedings and had little time and energy to do any wider mobilization. Though these legal battles kept the CFU constantly in the media, the level of its public activities had reached a plateau by the end of 1981 and slowly began to taper off. While the CFU failed to become self reliant, it managed to survive in those tough economic times, which in itself is a victory for the farmworkers' struggle. In addition they won many legal rights from the British Columbia government. More importantly, for the first time in Canada, farmworkers began to struggle for their rights in an organized manner. This chapter will look into both of these aspects of the farmworkers' struggle - its various phases, and its achievements.

PHASES OF THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS MOVEMENT

Invariably all movements have a life history of their own. They are dynamic phenomena. Along with acting as vehicles for social change, social movements go through changes in their own life span. A number of things may happen: a movement may change
from one type to another. A movement may have a change of leadership along the way, or it may go through organizational change. But even if there is no change of type, organization or leadership, a movement still passes through various phases in its life. The Canadian Farmworkers movement too has passed through some distinctive phases since its inception. These phases can be divided into three distinct periods as follows: 1) initial formation, 2) mobilization, and 3) institutionalization. A brief discussion about each of these phases will follow.

Phase One: Initial Formation

Within the predominantly Punjabi farm labour force a change took place during the 1970s. A large number of people in their twenties and early thirties, who had started their life in Canada as farmworkers, moved to other sectors. In their place, their parents—generally older and uneducated—took to farmwork.

While the workforce's composition changed, the conditions of work remained the same or worsened. For example, some contractors became more powerful and abusive in their dealings. Farmworkers would occasionally react to these conditions. Within the Indo-Canadian community one could come across many stories based on incidents in the fields, especially during early part of the 1970s. Farmworkers interviewed for this project also related some stories from their own experiences about workers getting upset over the contractors', farmers' or supervisors' behavior, especially their sexual advances towards women farmworkers. Most cases of conflict have involved contractors and workers. However,
there have been other incidents, some even with a touch of racism, involving young white supervisors behaving disrespectfully towards old uneducated Punjabi farmworkers. These events led to vocal protests, physical altercations, and, occasionally, collective action on the part of the workers.

It is useful to examine one of these stories in order to get a feeling of the tensions in the work situation. The following was told by a farmworker:

> There were more than a hundred of us picking berry that day in one field. The young white supervisor was rejecting our flats for one reason or another and was also calling us names. Most of us didn't understand English and had no idea what he was saying. When a young girl took her flat, he did the same thing to her. She understood and started to quarrel with him, which attracted other people's attention. Everybody was upset at that supervisor to begin with, and when he started fighting with this young girl people were really angry. Also by now everybody knew that he was calling names too. Everybody walked out of the field and demanded that the supervisor be fired right away. After couple of hours the farmer had to give in because he was losing crop. So he fired this supervisor and all of us went back to picking (Interview with Bachan Kour, August 7, 1985).

But such cases were unorganized and isolated and had no real effect on the conditions. Nevertheless, they were the necessary background which led to the formation of the Farm Workers Organizing Committee in early 1979. These conditions had created rampant feelings among farmworkers of being abused and treated unfairly. Many ex-farmworkers, especially the socially and politically conscious ones, were beginning to show concern for these conditions. Though these people, who were no longer involved in the agricultural industry directly, helped organize, they could do so only on the basis of widespread discontent among the workers. The long period of unorganized, silent protest and
occasional outbursts of violence was a period of preparation for the final organization to develop. This whole period, from the early 1970s to the formation of the Committee in 1979, especially the critical year of 1978, can be seen as the period of initial formation.

During the period immediately before and after the formation of the FWOC, the main emphasis was on defining the goals and targets and deciding on the type of action needed to achieve those aims. The organizers realized that without a recognized union they could not bargain for the improvement of the farmworkers’ conditions at each farm. At the same time they also realized that they would have to pressure the government to bring in legislative changes which would create the required context in which they could bargain as a union. The farmworkers, a marginal labour force, were in no position to pressure the government for their demands. That pressure had to be created by mobilizing the general public. However, no public mobilization was possible based on narrow economic issues. Even the formation of a union would have a greater effect if it was followed by broad-based agitation. Consequently, the issue was carefully presented as a social issue - much larger than simply a question of some extra money for the farmworkers. The conditions provided ample evidence to prove the claim that both the state and society at large were involved in discriminating against the farmworkers.

Phase Two: Mobilization

The main task after the Committee’s decision to form a pressure group was to take the farmworkers’ issue out to the
broader society so that public opinion could be mobilized in its support. Committee activists had been meeting and discussing the issues even before the formal organization was announced.

They began with holding larger meetings and by inviting the media. Since most of these activities were taking place in New Westminster, B.C., The Columbian, the local daily newspaper, gave them considerable attention from the beginning. Interviewed for this project, the labour reporter for this paper at the time had this to say about covering the farmworkers story in its initial stages:

We always gave it a greater play than anyone else. It made sense for us. We were a daily with a lot of agricultural land and we had a very vigorous labour beat on that paper because we were representative of an area with a lot of strong union activity. (Interview with Terry Glavin, August 12, 1985)

Vancouver’s two main dailies also gave considerable coverage to the farmworkers’ story. It was also covered by other dailies in major cities across the country. For example, in early May 1979, a long article appeared in the Montreal Star about farmworkers’ conditions and their struggles in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley. Along with the print media, the electronic media also showed similar reactions. Radio and television aired the story soon after the initial public meetings were organized by the committee. The national networks carried interviews with the FWOC organizers and made the farmworkers’ issue a concern of the whole nation.

The sudden impact of this news of “slave like conditions” (Vancouver Express, April 11, 1979:1) produced shock and anger in the general public. A participant in the movement who was raised on a dairy farm in the Fraser Valley expressed his reaction when
he first heard about it: "I was shocked by the fact that people were forced to work and live in those kinds of conditions. I know I've been on the inside of those barns. They are built for cattle, not for people" (Interview with Mike Fleming, August 14, 1985).

People in general and organized labour in particular were very receptive to the mobilization efforts of the Committee. One significant reason why many people in B.C. were so sympathetic towards the farmworkers' issue was that there existed an air of conflict between labour and employers. The Socred government's policies had irritated the labour movement. This resentment against the government was later expressed in the province wide Solidarity Movement. Conditions in the agricultural industry were an extreme example of the deteriorating labour situation in the province. And for this reason the issue immediately became the rallying point for B.C.'s labour movement.

Along with the trade union movement, people active in social, political or economic issues were also approached by the Committee. For example, organizations dealing with women's issues, racism, native people's issues, the peace movement and other contemporary social and political issues came forward in support of the farmworkers' movement as well.

Though the organizers were not directly involved in starting and maintaining support committees, these were encouraged and welcomed. Information requested by these committees was promptly sent in the form of literature or through staff visitors from the main office in Burnaby, British Columbia.

The FWOC and later the CUW organizers were able to utilize this wider support by organizing meetings, demonstrations, public
rallies, marches and petitions. Public meetings were held regularly in Greater Vancouver, throughout the Fraser Valley and occasionally in other parts of the province as well as in the rest of the country. By bringing together large numbers of people in these various events the organizers were able to impress upon the government and the general public the seriousness of the matter.

To solidify the movement and broaden the network of volunteers, other "lighter" events such as benefit dinners and dances were also frequently organized. In addition to raising money, these occasions were helpful in introducing the issue to new people and solidifying the movement. Since it is easier to make contacts on personal levels in a relaxed atmosphere these events were also helpful in contacting potential volunteers.

This particular phase of the struggle began when the committee was formed in early 1979 and lasted well into 1982, more than two years after the formation of the union. During this time a large number of people, not only in the lower mainland, but across the country were mobilized to raise their voices in support of the farmworkers issue.

Phase Three: Institutionalization

A social movement is a dynamic phenomenon; it goes through high tides and low ebbs. Eventually it also comes to an end. Unique to each movement are numerous factors that lead to its end. In the case of the farmworkers' struggle the main factor has been its transformation into a trade union.

As mentioned earlier the farmworkers' struggle started to
lose its public profile by 1981. The involvement of organizers in legal proceedings was such that they were unable to continue wider mobilization. The struggle began to resemble more and more a functioning trade union than a wider social movement. This was inevitable because the organized units had to be provided with certain services. These included regular membership meetings at each unit in which an official from the CFU had to be present. Similarly negotiations had to be held with employers. Most of the farmers being anti-union, they first fought against certifications as far as they legally could and then hired expert lawyers to negotiate on their behalf, making it hard for the union. Consequently, the leadership was tied up in these matters.

The most damaging aspect of these involvements was the time spent at the Labour Relations Board hearings. All of the union officials, farmworkers and supporters contacted for this study expressed frustrations. Judy Cavanagh speaks for all of them when she says:

My most frustrating time was with the LRB. I would sit in those hearings day after day and listen to the lies and the bullshit coming from growers; listen to lies and bullshit coming from some of the workers who were against organizing. (Interview with Judy Cavanagh, November 17, 1985)

The process which the farmworkers movement was going through is known as "institutionalization" in sociological literature. The institutionalization of a movement means that "it may become part of the dominant power structure by developing into an interest group or political party" (Rush, 1979:447). The farmworkers movement ended by transformation into an interest group - a trade union. And as we have seen the normal functions of a trade union make it rather difficult for the leadership to
devote time to other wider issues.

Though there were even a greater number of public meetings and demonstrations and other collective actions during the first year of the union and it kept the issue very much in the media, the year 1981 saw a steady increase in trade union activity. The CFU organizers had to handle two picket lines, one in Langley and the other one in Richmond, without any prior experience in these matters. They had to spend considerable time at the LRB proceedings as well. The situation continued into the next year. In 1982, except for a benefit dinner in August, no other public event took place during the whole year. On the other hand a brief look at the chronology (see Appendix A) of that year shows how busy the union leadership and its many volunteers were.

Along with the transformation of the farmworkers' struggle into a union, another factor, the Social Credit government's introduction in August 1980 of The Employment Standards Act may have also contributed to the loss of the movement's momentum. The announcement of the Act represented a number of things. It meant recognition and an acceptance by the government that it was discriminating against a sector of the labour force by keeping them excluded from legislative protection. It also meant that the government had responded to pressure from the farmworkers movement. While this was a significant victory for the farmworkers, it also meant, as Jhappan (1983:87) argues, that "the Act has, to an extent, pre-empted the need for further large-scale agitation by the union". However, if the introduction of the Act in fact had some effect on the movement, it certainly did not last very long. The government is still seen as responsible for not enforcing the law and especially for not
establishing regulations in areas such as health and safety.

All the factors discussed above, especially the transformation of the movement into a trade union, caused it to lose the characteristics of a social movement. However, initially it was quite successful as a trade union as observed by other trade unions: “For a small union, the most impressive part is the organizing that has been done. Concentrating on both seasonal and year-round workers, the CFU has won a number of certifications” (B.C. Federation Labour News, November, 1980:9).

The initial success of the union did not continue. Instead of gaining new certifications and signing new contracts, it began to lose the ones it already had. The most important factor was the general economic situation in the province. Continued high unemployment in the preceding years had very grave implications for every sector of the economy, especially agriculture. As one farmworker put it, “Here you are already at the bottom of things and can’t go anywhere else” (Interview with Pritam Singh Mukkar, October 28, 1983).

The changes introduced by the Social Credit Government in its now infamous July 7, 1983 budget also added considerably to the CFU problems. The “Restraint Budget”, as it was known, had 26 new bills with the majority attacking the rights of the poor and the working class. The government abolished the Human Rights Branch and the Human Rights Commission. The most damaging aspects, not just for the CFU but for the entire labour movement, were contained in Bills 2, 3, 11, 18 and 261. The changes made in the Labour Code under Bill 28 on May 16, 1984 directly attacked the rights of organized labour. The effect of these amendments was enormous. They “made it much harder to organize workers and
on the other hand made decertification much easier" (Int. Cavanagh, op. cit.). Some organizers and supporters felt that perhaps it was not a correct decision to form the union only after a year's work by the Organizing Committee. Cavanagh's response was, "I think that the union happened too soon. The FWOC should have gone for two full seasons" (Ibid.). The same sentiment was expressed by Karen Dean, who had long been a volunteer for the CFU while working for the Farmworkers' Legal Services in Abbotsford. She said: "Retroactively, I'm believing more and more it was not a right decision", and she adds, "That's not a criticism" (Interview with Karen Dean, September 19, 1985). It is important to note that these people did not feel that a mistake was made, but after going through the experience they thought that it might have been better the other way.

A number of other reasons were also expressed by the participants. For example, one supporter of the CFU interviewed for this study, who did not want to be identified, said that the union was too much concerned with wider social issues which has caused it to ignore the real struggle. He cited the case of the union's involvement in the fight between British Columbia Organization to Fight Racism (BCOFR) and the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) [CPC(ML)]:

It seems to me that the fight with the CPC(ML) was a real turning point for the union. You see that was a BCOFR vs CPC(ML) fight and the CFU should not have been identified with that. From what I have heard from farmworkers, some farmworkers anyway, they didn't want anything to do with that kind of thing.

The incident concerned a public rally organized by the BCOFR protesting the murder of an innocent Indo-Canadian by some
racists. The rally, held in October, 1981 in a public park in South Vancouver, was physically disrupted by a contingent of the CPC(ML). A widely publicized violent confrontation resulted. CFU activists, along with a large number of other trade unions, political and social groups were participating in the BCOFR rally. One confusing factor was that the President of the BCOFR Charanpal Gill had been a well publicized figure as the Secretary of the CFU before he became involved in the fight against racism. But more importantly it seems that the CFU had no choice but to join in the struggle against racism. The racist elements in society in general and among farmers in particular were trying to turn farmworkers' struggle into a racial issue. The racist Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was becoming active in the Fraser Valley. During the month of July, 1981 a newspaper headline read: "Klan Returns to Mission Area" (Abbotsford, Matsqui and Sumas News, July 19, 1981:6). Though there were no evidence of clear links between farmers and Klan activity, there were many such possibilities. There were efforts to turn the struggle against the Jensen Mushroom Farms as a racial issue. A journalist Doug Collins, widely known for his racist reporting, had this to say about Langley farmworkers' struggle:

Raj Chouhan, the self-sacrificing leader of the CFU, goes around talking about "the injustices of Canadian society". Well, I wish he would keep his mouth shut because if there are any injustices in the Fraser Valley they are to be found on the farms owned by Chouhan's compatriots from India, not Kaj Jensen's spread. But I don't notice the union picketing them (the Columbian, May 25, 1981: 5).

It is likely that the political situation in India affected the farmworkers' struggle as well. As is clear from the
media coverage of the last few years, the political developments in the Punjab state of India, where the majority of farmworkers originate, have had drastic effects on the Punjabi community in B.C .. The situation affected the farmworkers' struggle in a number of ways. For one thing it divided the attention of the predominantly Punjabi leadership in the CFU. It placed limits on the type of action they could take. And this was obviously too much for at least one full time activist. Judy Cavanagh, who left the union in early 1985, expressed her frustrations this way: "Looking back now what broke my back was that all the attention for a period of about four months during 1984 was focused on India. This was the time when the Hoss Farm struggle was going on" (Int. Cavanagh, op. cit.). Additionally, since the whole issue involved religion, the Punjabi farmers and contractors were able to use it against the CFU by labeling them as anti-Sikh.

These external factors were having their effect on other activists and the leadership of the CFU as well. Of the original five who were in the FWOC - Harinder Mahil, Raj Chouhan, Charan Gill, Judy Cavanagh and Sarwan Boal - only Sarwan Boal remained by 1986. The latest casualty was Raj Chouhan who resigned from his position as the President at the sixth convention held on March 16, 1986. Gill left because he became too involved in the struggle against racism during 1980. Mahil found a job in the Ministry of Labour in 1982. And as mentioned above Judy Cavanagh left in the spring of 1985.

The above discussion may give the impression that the farmworkers' movement has not been a successful event in any sense. Like any movement, this movement has also left its imprint in a number of ways on society in British Columbia in general and
on the farmworkers in particular. The section that follows deals with some of the achievements of the farmworkers' struggle.

ACHIEVEMENTS

In its short history the Canadian farmworkers movement - both the FWOC and the CFU - made a number of significant gains. It made the Canadian public aware about the exploitation and oppression of a highly vulnerable workforce. It won unprecedented legal rights for the farmworkers. Though in 1986 it had a small membership and financially still depended on outside support, the CFU had become an influential force within the trade union movement. Most importantly, the movement once again showed that unionization is possible in the Canadian agricultural sector.

The achievements of the farmworkers movement can be divided into two different categories: 1) gains for the farmworkers and 2) contributions to the society. While group one consists of changes in the UIC regulations, WCB coverage, licensing and bonding of contractors, and the extension of the labour code to cover the agricultural labour force, the second category contains the movement's effects on the society in general. Following is a brief discussion about these contributions of the farmworkers' movement.

Gains For The Farmworkers

In British Columbia, labour legislation historically has not been extended to labour in the agricultural sector. Finally, under pressure from the farmworkers' movement, the Social Credit
government acknowledged its responsibility for discriminatory
treatment of farmworkers and passed The Employment Standards Act
in August 1980. Unfortunately, benefits of this change have been
minimal because regulations introduced by the government in
January 1981 rendered these changes practically ineffective.
Farmworkers were still excluded from regulations covering
overtime pay, general holidays, minimum hourly pay and hours of
work legislation (CFU, 1983). Although it is not a complete
victory for farmworkers, it is a step in the right direction.

Most of the changes that have come about as a result of
the struggle affected farm labour in B.C., but some had
implications for farmworkers across the country. One such change
occurred concerning section 16 of the Unemployment Insurance Act
Regulations. The CFU did intensive lobbying to eliminate this
regulation which stated that the farmworkers had to work 25 days
with the same grower during a season in order to become eligible
for UI benefits. The CFU argued that this stipulation caused much
hardship to the farmworkers by entangling them in a bureaucratic
maze and forcing them to rely upon labour contractors who could
take them from farm to farm to provide the necessary 25 days
(Ibid.). In response to the CFU's submission, the Minister of
Employment and Immigration Lloyd Axworthy promised that
farmworkers would be treated equal to workers in the other
sectors. But the farmers' lobby seemed to have partly changed his
mind. On July 25, 1983, when the Regulation was amended,
farmworkers were still required to work 7 days and earn $77.00 a
week with the same grower in a season before they became eligible
for UI benefits. The CFU claimed it "a small victory" and vowed
that "we will be working to eliminate Regulation 16 until we have
the same stipulations as all other workers in Canada" (CFU, n.d.).

A similar campaign was carried out to have the agricultural labour force covered under the Workers' Compensation Board. Responding to a high profile public campaign from July 1981 to March 1982, the British Columbia government announced on March 30, 1982 that it was extending WCB coverage to all farmworkers in the province, to take effect April 4, 1983. The announcement included that the "Automatic insurance coverage and safety regulations would apply to farmworkers" (Ibid.). But a month before it was to go in effect the government backed down on its promise. Instead of enforcing WCB health and safety regulations, they suggested establishing an educational farm safety agency. Understandably, the CFU was furious and refused to deal with the agency; instead it organized two public demonstrations and tried to create other public pressure with "letters of condemnation being sent by labour and community groups to the Ministry of Labour" (CFU, 1983).

Though the CFU leadership considered it a serious setback, some of its supporters were satisfied for the time being and quite hopeful about future WCB coverage. Such feelings were expressed by Calvin Sandborn, a member of the B.C. Law Union:

Hundreds of workers are now getting benefits from WCB that didn't before. We are going to get safety regulations. I mean, they are holding up, but regulations are sitting on the desk of the chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board right now (Interview with Calvin Sandborn, October 24, 1985).

In the beginning one of the farmworkers' struggle's target enemies was the contract system. The movement was not able to eliminate the contractors but it forced the government to place
some legal restrictions on them. Consequently, the contractors became licensed and bonded. Still it provided a very limited security for farmworkers, because these laws were not enforced. This lack of policing resulted in breaches as confirmed by a long term contractor (Interview with Kishan Walia, October 23, 1985). This could cause problems for the workers. Again, though limited, this was a victory which improved working conditions for the farmworkers.

In the context of the contract system the unsafe travelling conditions were another issue of concern. In addition to general overcrowding and uncomfortable seating, there were a number of serious accidents, some even causing deaths. As a result of the pressure the authorities acted occasionally to check the contractors’ vans. This changed travelling conditions but only to a limited extent.

Conditions in the fields and in the cabins where farmworkers lived during the harvest season were other major areas of concern. The CFU fought constantly for provision of drinking water, lunch rooms and toilet facilities, along with childcare and controlled use of pesticides in the fields. Under pressure from the union many farmers started providing drinking water and toilet facilities in the fields but the situation in general remained unchanged. The union spent an enormous amount of energy to bring the issue of pesticide dangers into the public’s attention. In order to educate farmworkers and the general public they published a number of leaflets and brochures such as Regulations not Deaths: “Farmworkers Health and Safety” (n.d.). To substantiate their arguments they included in this brochure a survey done by the Matsqui-Abbotsford Community Services on
agricultural pesticides. Among other frightening figures the survey revealed:

8 out of 10 farmworkers regularly suffer from direct contact with pesticides and a majority (55 percent) have been directly sprayed. 7 out of 10 farmworkers became physically ill after a direct spraying, yet only 3% received medical help from their employers (CFU, n.d.).

Much of the media attention during 1980 focussed on the living conditions in the shacks provided by farmers. Due to bad publicity and union pressure some farmers either built new cabins or upgraded the old ones. Again, despite a few improvements the overall picture remained more or less the same.

Meanwhile, the union continued to agitate for improvements, often ending in frustration. CFU President Raj Chouhan angrily asked: "How much longer do the farmworkers have to harvest misery, poverty and death?" (Vancouver Sun, September 29, 1984:A 9). He added that "I feel like a broken record" because:

Despite five years of appeals for equality and despite repeated tragedies in the fields, the situation has remained unchanged... Many continue to live in chicken coops and barns and more will be maimed and killed. (Ibid.)

One area where the union has been quite successful is in recovering unpaid wages for scores of farmworkers over the last seven years. A striking example, as discussed in the last chapter, was the quick victory scored by the FWOC in the summer of 1979, when they helped a group of farmworkers recover more than $80,000 from a grower in the Abbotsford area. The significance of this victory was not the amount of money recovered, but the impact this action had on the rest of the industry. It created an unprecedent confidence among workers and
consequently a fear among farmers and contractors.

There were a number of other cases where farmworkers were able to recover their wages, sometimes after long court battles. These cases were fought by the union saving workers from legal fees and other related expenses. With the help of B.C. Law Union members, the CFU was able to extend free legal services to farmworkers in their problems with UI and other related concerns.

While always being occupied with other issues as discussed above, the union was also involved in organizing farmworkers at individual farms in the Fraser Valley. It successfully won certifications and signed contracts at a number of farms. The signed contracts were the result of long negotiations and sometimes long strikes. At Jensen Mushroom farms in Langley the strike lasted for fifteen months. The first contract signed with Bell Farms Ltd. contained the following major provisions:

- A 30% pay increase to $6.67 per hour for regular employees - pay boosted to $5.80 per hour for seasonal workers - a union shop - seniority provisions - a standard 8 hour day, 40 hour week, plus overtime - health provisions - full insurance and workers’ compensation coverage - pay for statutory holidays - equal pay for work of equal value - work cannot be contracted out (CFU, n.d.).

Another important contribution, perhaps more important than all the gains discussed above in the long run, was the introduction of immigrant farmworkers to working class struggles in an industrial society. As discussed in chapters four and five these workers came from a non-industrial society and retained many of the values and notions of the peasant culture. Loyalties based upon affiliations to caste, family, religion and geographical regions are often too strong a barrier for class based solidarity and action to take place. Traditions and the
religious precepts like "Karma" which conditioned people to accept their situation as pre-destined also had their hold. Punjabi farmers and contractors were able to use these old values to control and exploit. The union, through countless public meetings, through its literature and through personal contacts, stressed upon the workers the necessity of understanding the class based social relations in the present situation. It is not too much to say that the movement had speeded up the process of proletarization of these workers.

Consequently there is a visible change among the workers who took part in the union activity. A case in point are the women workers who participated in the strike action at Jensen Mushroom Farm in 1981 and Hoss Mushroom Farm in 1984. It has been already noted how the strike action at the Jensen Farms, with 24-hour picket lines, went on for 15 months. There was serious intimidation on the site, often taking violent forms. But the workers stuck it out despite the fact that many of them - particularly the many women workers from the Punjabi Community - had never had an experience of working class struggles. From the point of view of breaking through the hold of old values and customs, the struggle at Hoss Farm was even more significant: not only was the owner himself a Punjabi, all of the 14 workers belonged to the same community, 12 of them being women. Eleven of the women decided to join the union. The farmer found out and fired five of them the same day and the other six the next morning. A long struggle followed, first on the picket line and later at the LRB hearings. None of the women had ever taken a part in any type of protest or demonstration in their lives. In the beginning not only did they feel strange but were also
intimidated carrying placards and shouting slogans on the picket line. They feared negative pressure from within their families (husbands, fathers, brothers) as well as from their social networks in the community. But they were able to hold together, particularly because the picket line always had a large number of outside supporters there. During an interview, one of them said: "we have never been on a picket line or in a demonstration before. But since we have gone through this struggle we feel much stronger now and we are willing and ready to help anybody else who wants to make a union."5.

Contributions To Society

The above discussion shows that on the whole the gains made by farmworkers through struggles have been limited. The frustrations caused by this lack of success out in the fields have created organizational problems resulting in the change of leadership during the Sixth Annual Convention of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. By this Convention the union had only one legal certification and only 250 dues paying members (Vancouver Sun, March 17, 1986:A3).

These recent developments and the present situation could easily lead to the conclusion that the movement completely failed. Social movements in which a society or a part of a society participate always leave their mark on that society. The farmworkers' movement is no exception in this respect. Even if the CFU were to permanently close its doors its achievements would keep it in the annals of labour history in B.C.. Following is a discussion about the farmworkers' movement's contributions
to the society in general and the trade union movement in particular.

Ironically, people in British Columbia knew more about farmworkers’ conditions elsewhere, especially in California, even though the local situation was periodically discussed in the media. The FWOC not only exposed the conditions in the agricultural industry, it presented the situation in a wider historical and social context and mobilized a large number of people behind this issue.

While not being a successful trade union itself, the CFU made a significant impact on the trade union movement not only in B.C. but across the whole country. According to a trade unionist: “The CFU is trying to organize the unorganized and in that sense it is a very powerful movement because it is on the leading edge of the kinds of fights that have a real impact on the trade union as a whole” (Interview with Mike Fleming, August 14, 1985). In addition the following remarks show one of the many ways that the farmworkers’ struggle affected the trade union movement:

It does give labour an excuse for their insistence, a rationale for their existence. It’s sort of an answer to a lot of people’s remark: “Well, yeah, unions used to be necessary but they’re not any more”. The farmworkers situation is the perfect answer to that. Any labourer can say, “Look, this is what happens when you don’t have an organized industry. The employers wreck havoc and screw the workers unmercifully”. (Int. Sandborn, op.cit.)

The farmworkers struggle contributed somewhat to the unification of the labour movement. There were a lot of different factions within the working class, who had disagreements on many things. However they had came together in support of the farmworkers struggles. For example, the two main national organizations of the organized Canadian workforce - the CLC and
the CCU fully supported the issue. The CCU support continued even after the CFU decided to join CLC.

The farmworkers' movement was successful in establishing the trade union tradition in the agricultural sector which had been an exception in a working class with long trade union traditions in other sectors. This will no doubt be useful in future struggles even if the present union were to discontinue.

While a movement is influenced by the political environment in which it takes place, at the same time it influences that environment in return. The anti-labour policies of the Social Credit government in B.C. had created an environment in which labour was willing to unite and fight for its rights. And as Art Kube, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, remarked, farmworkers' issue quickly became a 'raison de'être' for B.C. labour overall. The farmworkers' movement's influence on the political environment can be seen from the fact that it became almost a necessity for many politicians, especially those on the left, to regularly make reference to this issue in their speeches. Farmworkers' conditions helped many British Columbians to see how unconcerned the Social Credit government was for the little guy in the province. It politicized a lot of people through its demonstrations and marches.

According to some observers the farmworkers struggle did a commendable job of bringing together a number of individuals and organizations especially with left political orientation. This was possible because the CFU was willing to take independent political action. In the words of a participant:

There are not too many unions who would do that. What most unions do is to vote NDP and that is the extent of their political action. The farmworkers would take political action independent of any
political party. That stand has drawn a lot of support from the left (Int. Fleming, op.cit).

In B.C. in 1983 the working class and a good portion of society in general protested against the Social Credit government's budget. Under the name of the Solidarity Movement numerous demonstrations and marches consisting of large unprecedented numbers in the province's history were organized during the summer of 1983. In a small way, the farmworkers' struggle of the previous years contributed to prepare the people for the Solidarity Movement. While discussing the birth of this movement, William K. Carroll, one of the editors and authors of a recent book about the Sacred "Restraint" programme, has shown the importance (though in his discussion he does not mention the role of the CFU specifically) of the work done by organizations such as the CFU:

All initial gatherings took advantage of existing networks and organizations in mobilizing hundreds of trade unionists, community activists and others. The emerging coalition drew upon union locals, municipal organizations (such as the Committee of Progressive Electors and the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association), and various groups that had emerged from the social movements and economic distress of recent years (Carroll, 1984:97).

Since a majority of the farmworkers belonged to the Indo-Canadian community, the movement had a number of positive implications for that community as well. Though the members of this community had been a part of the Canadian working class for close to a century, their existence was really not acknowledged. With this movement not only did they become a part of the working class, but at the same time a part of the working class movement. As Glavin has observed: "the public perception of the East Indians has changed - changed for the better" (Interview with
Terry Glavin, August 12, 1985).

A programme called the ESL (English as a Second Language) Crusade, to teach English to the farmworkers, has been going on since the fall of 1982. It was "inspired by political literacy campaigns in third world countries such as Nicaragua" (CFU, n.d.). The CFU's ESL Crusade adapted the philosophy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire to the situation of B.C. farmworkers. It "focuses on the English which workers need to learn: some is basic survival English and some relates specifically to the farmworker" (Ibid.).

Since the programme began, it helped a number of farmworkers to handle their day-to-day lives without relying on others for language needs. In addition the ESL programme helped break the cultural barriers for many farmworkers. Those who had no previous contact with whites, and had many hesitations and fears, became very friendly with their tutors who were mainly Anglo volunteers. The programme financed by the B.C. Teachers' Federation and other educational institutions, was organized by a paid coordinator, and a reliance on volunteer tutors.

Since its beginning, the CFU often held benefit dinners and dances. These gatherings served more than one purpose. Along with raising money they were a place for cultural exchange for people involved in the farmworkers movement. People from various different cultural backgrounds have danced both to the ancient Punjabi drums and to the Western pop music.

In order to attract people to its meetings the CFU always included in its programmes many cultural items such as Punjabi folk dancing, poetry and songs and occasionally dramas as well. In the process the movement inspired a cultural movement around
the farmworkers struggles. Many songs and poems were written about the farmworkers' problems and their efforts to overcome those problems. Punjabi artists have written and performed plays about the struggle. For example:

One organization, Vancouver Sath, recently completed a twenty-five minute play called Picket Line, based on a mushroom farm strike in June 1984, in which CFU was involved. So far it has been performed twice, for audiences of 450 and 700 (Jackson 1985:11).

The Farmworkers struggle in its short but eventful history not only brought some improvements to the everyday lives of farmworkers; it made them more conscious workers and in a way prepared the ground for future struggles. At the same time it made significant contributions to the trade union movement in particular and the Canadian society in general.
Notes to Chapter VI

1. One source, Magnusson, et al. (1984:281-282) explained the changes brought by these bills as follows:
   Bill 2 - Public Service Labour Relations Amendment Act. Removes government employees' rights to negotiate job security, promotion, job reclassification, transfer, work hours and other working conditions. Died on order paper (part of Kelowna accord).
   Bill 3 - Public Sector Restraint Act. Enables public sector employers to fire employees without cause upon expiry of collective agreement. "Without cause" phrase later removed but very broad termination conditions remain. Became law October 21, 1983; major public sector unions negotiated exemptions.
   Bill 11 - Compensation Stabilization Amendment Act. Extends indefinitely public sector wage controls; makes employer's ability to pay paramount; establishes new guidelines of minus-5% to plus-5%. Became law October 21, 1983.


3. Occasionally there have been attempts to organize workers in Canada's agricultural industry in the early parts of this century, especially in the 1930s. One significant example is the efforts of the sugar beet workers in Southern Alberta in late 1930s. Their struggles developed into the Beet Workers Industrial Union. For more detail see John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, "Workers, Growers and Monopolists: The "Labour Problem" in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry During the 1930s", Labour/Le Travailleur. 1978.

4. The documentary film "Time to Rise" was made at the time of this strike and contains good coverage on the struggle as well as interviews with the workers.

5. Six women farmworkers from Hoss Mushroom Farm were interviewed as a group during the lunch break in a day long LRB hearing on June 22, 1984 at Vancouver. The interview, in Punjabi was conducted by myself and a friend Sukhwant Hundal and was published in Watno Dur (May/June, 1984), a Punjabi language literary magazine.
Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

This study began with the general observation that the agricultural sector in Canada has traditionally been viewed as unorganizable. In British Columbia that view was held to the extent that farmworkers did not even exist for the leadership of the trade union movement (Interview with Art Kube, December 18, 1985). It is hoped that by recording and examining contemporary farmworkers' struggles in the Mainland District of B.C., this study might help to end some of the myths about the unorganizability of the agricultural labour force.

The organizing techniques of the activists who struggled for farmworkers' rights were by no means their own creation. Others have used wider mobilization to pressure the authorities for change, such as the farmworkers' movement in California. But B.C. activists were able to use specific strategies and tactics which for the first time in the country's history made farmworkers' issue a national concern.

With the contention that the farmworkers' struggle took on the characteristics of a social movement, a discussion about conceptual and theoretical problems contained in the sociological literature about the phenomenon of social movements was undertaken. Hopefully the study has shown the implications of some of these theoretical aspects. For instance, as explored in Chapter Six, the farmworkers' movement went through distinct and discernible phases. It conceptualized its goals and target enemies. The leadership emerged from the movement itself from previously unknown individuals. In other words the movement
produced its leaders and not vice versa. It acquired a structure—a central body supported by many organizations (such as support committees) and individuals with loose links.

It was also argued that the objective conditions and the marginality of the labour force in the agricultural industry necessitated a wider involvement of non-farmworkers in their issue. For these reasons the study examined, in Chapters Three and Four, the objective conditions and the marginality of the labour force before retracing the actual development of the movement.

The persistence of small-scale production units and the natural and structural obstacles which limit capital penetration, makes B.C.'s agricultural industry highly labour intensive. This is even more true in the Mainland District where mainly vegetables and small fruits are grown, requiring large numbers of workers during harvesting. The absence of class struggle has been an important reason behind the lack of capitalization. Interestingly, ever since the farmworkers have begun their protest the small fruit growers in the Mainland District have switched from strawberries to raspberries in the Abbotsford area, mainly because the latter can be harvested by machines. However, farmworkers are still preferred over machines for the simple reason that machines are not perfected yet (Interview with Mohinder Gill, October 4, 1985).

In addition it was observed that not only does the industry depend heavily on labour, it relies on cheap and docile labour. Since the labour force in this sector has been traditionally excluded from legislation which provided protection to workers in other sectors, it has little choice but to work,
live and travel under unsafe, unsanitary conditions. This study attempted to identify the overall structure and the prevalent conditions in the industry as well as it tried to examine the role played by the state and the organized labour in this situation. The analysis of the conditions and the existing labour process was necessary to come to grips with the later developments which the movement went through.

The study retraced the origin and progress of the farmworkers' protest against the conditions in the industry. It was discovered that since its inception in early 1979, the struggle acquired the characteristics of a social movement but by the end of 1981 it began to resemble more a functioning trade union. Social movements being very dynamic phenomena must end some time. But it is not possible to set any definite rules about the length of time a movement lasts or how it ends.

The transformation of the Farm Workers Organizing Committee into the Canadian Farmworkers Union was the beginning of its decline as a social movement. The direct implication of this suggestion seems to be that these two things - a trade union and a social movement - cannot exist side by side. However, that does not hold up when we consider the experiences of the farmworkers' struggles in California. Although the UFWA has been a functioning trade union with thousands of dues paying members for a number of years, at the same time it has not lost its characteristics as a social movement. Only at the end of last year (1985) Cesar Chavez was again on the continent-wide campaign promoting a new boycott against the California growers who refused to bargain with his union.

The farmworkers' movement in British Columbia has not
shown the same level of activity since 1982. Though a logical conclusion could be to leave it at that, there are a number of other aspects of the ongoing struggle which warn us against such a conclusion. For one thing this study has also discovered that those objective conditions which necessitated a wider mobilization to begin with, still largely exist in the industry. On the surface the government has brought farmworkers under the protection of labour legislation with the introduction of Employment Standards Act in 1980, but the regulations introduced a year later provided little protection in practical terms. Furthermore, even the laws that do exist are not properly enforced.

Another aspect which this study has discovered is the uninterrupted support for the farmworkers both among organized labour and the society in general. This support was visible at the benefit dinner held by the union as late as October 1985. More than 500 people, a majority from the trade unions, attended the dinner. Also present again was Cesar Chavez. Similarly, in June 1986 the CFU organized a demonstration in downtown Vancouver to protest the changes made in the UI regulations which drew more than 300 people, mainly farmworkers.

Keeping these two aspects in mind - the persistence of objective conditions in the industry and the perennial support from various quarters for the farmworkers' cause - one can draw only one conclusion: that though the struggle has lost some of its social movement characteristics for the time being, the possibilities of its turning into one again are very real, especially when one considers the amount of politicization or proletarization of farmworkers that has been achieved in the last
few years.

One must question the role of the leadership which has not made the switch back to the wider collective mobilization against the state and the industry as a whole; especially since it has continuously lost certifications instead of organizing new units. The high unemployment in the province coupled with the anti-labour policies of the Social credit government, has made organizing new units difficult for a fledgling union like the CFU. As one supporter suggested, the union could still turn things around by listening carefully to the advice of such experienced people as Cesar Chavez, which is not to go after individual producers, but to take on the agricultural industry as a whole or producers of a specific crop such as mushroom growers in the Lower Mainland (Interview with Hari Sharma, March 19, 1986).

Despite the above observations, the farmworkers' movement and its leadership has much to be proud of. As discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis the movement's achievements have been many, some having indirect and long term effect for the general society and others being directly and immediately beneficial for the farmworkers.

Since the whole phenomenon of the farmworkers' movement has involved a large number of Indo-Canadians both in the actual industry and in the struggle, the movement has had some very positive effects on the community as a whole. As a commentator put it in one of the Indo-Canadian newspapers back in 1981, "to gain recognition for the exploited and unrecognized farmworkers of Canada and particularly of British Columbia" (Dosanjh, 1981:5) was a significant contribution of the Indo-Canadian community.
Furthermore, the very fact that the CFU has continued to survive has been a victory in itself, especially at a time when even the long established unions are finding it hard to survive in British Columbia. Even if the CFU were to close its doors it could never be called a failure for all it has already achieved in its short history. The gains made by the working class will help any future organizing efforts, specifically in the agricultural industry but for other industries as well. For those who were involved in the struggle and may feel disheartened Karen Dean, a participant, had this to say:

Anybody who feels defeated or tends to look at the history thus far of the farmworkers' union in a negative sense, I always say to that person, "if you want to talk to me about farmworkers go and read The Long Road To Delano". I think it can make people understand how long it takes to build the farmworkers movement. I mean the first organization of union in California was something like in the 1890s and nobody heard of a farmworkers' union until 1960s Grape boycott, outside of the valleys in California where a strike might have happen here or there. (Interview with Karen Dean, September 19, 1985)

While concluding, it may be worth discussing some aspects of this study. Where it has picked numerous examples of collective mobilization much more could have been brought into account. It has been able to record only a small part of the activity that has constituted the farmworkers' movement. No single study could ever do justice to the many battles waged by the leadership, numerous farmworkers and supporters. In other words there are countless possibilities of further studies about the farmworkers' struggle.

Nevertheless the study provides a fresh example in the growing literature on social movements. It is a further illustration of the process of a social movement. The study
attempts to show systematically how a social movement grows and how it slowly peters out. Its significance lies in the fact that it explores the struggles of a sector of the working class within the "core" nations of international capitalism which the bourgeoisie has hoped will not become part of the ongoing class struggle. Under the framework of an international division of labour, Punjabi immigrants were allowed in to do low paying, physically hard jobs in sectors such as the agricultural industry of B.C. The underlying assumption was that the marginality plus the ethnic and racial factors would make it extremely difficult for immigrant farmworkers to demand higher wages and better working conditions. This study is an illustration of the fact that this marginal labour force has stood up and demanded parity with the mainstream working class. In fact this study is unique in the sense that it provides an example in which newly arrived immigrant workers struggle for better conditions aided not only by the organized section of the mainstream working class but by the society at large as well. In the Canadian context at least, this is a new development. By providing a contemporary view of a very contemporary struggle the study can be useful as an example of the marginal labour force's struggles in industrial societies and also as an historical document for future references in the struggles of the working class.
Appendix A

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE IMPORTANT EVENTS IN
THE FARMWORKER'S STRUGGLE

1978

Sept. 15. A meeting of 25 to 30 people was held in Surrey to
discuss farm workers' problems.

Nov. 16. A gathering of 50 to 60 people, many of them
farm workers, took place in the IWA Hall in New Westminster,
B.C. Gerry Stoney the President of the IWA New West. Local spoke
and assured help for farm workers' cause. A film about California
farm workers' struggle was shown and discussed.

1979

Feb. 25. The Farm Workers Organizing Committee formed.

Apr. 8. First public meeting attended by close to 400 people
was held by the FWOC at the Carpenters' Hall. It received good
media coverage in the Columbian and the Vancouver Express.

May 13. Another large meeting (300-400 people) was held in
Mission B.C.

May 20. The FWOC opened an office in Burnaby.

May 25. The Committee decided to join the boycott against
Chiquita Bananas in support of the UFWA. Received extensive media
coverage.

June 11. A meeting titled "Farmworkers' Conference" was held at
Vancouver's David Thompson School. A number of trade union
leaders spoke.

July 16. The FWOC scored its first major victory. The Committee
collected $80,000 dollars in back wages from Mukhtiar Growers
Ltd. in Abbotsford. As a result Committee's membership jumps from
300 to 1,000.

Aug. 4. Close to 300 people attended the FWOC's meeting in
Abbotsford's Airport Hall.

Aug. 25. The FWOC organized a demonstration in the farming area
of Abbotsford.

Nov. 3. More than 300 people demonstrated in front of the Hyatt
Regency Hotel in Vancouver, the site of the Sacred convention.
A petition containing over 15,000 signatures was
handed to Premier Bennet.
Nov. 6. The Committee meets with Deputy Labour Minister in Burnaby.

1980

Feb. 23. A Brief was presented to the B.C. Government by the FWOC.

Apr. 6. The Canadian Farmworkers Union was formed in New Westminster, B.C.
        The CLC pledged $40,000 dollars to the CFU.

Apr. 13. CFU president attended a ten day conference on Racism

Apr. 26. Cesar Chavez spoke in Vancouver at a meeting of more than 600 people gathered to celebrate the formation of the CFU.

May 4-9. CFU attended the CLC convention at Winnipeg.

May 30. The CFU applied for certification at the Jensen Mushroom Farms in Langley.

June 18. CFU officials meet Agricultural Minister Jack Heinrich.

June 28. More than 350 people demonstrated against Dredger Farms in Langley.

July 10. A Bill, to extend labour legislations to farmworkers and domestic workers, introduced in the Legislature.

July 12. March and a rally in Abbotsford to protest labour contract system.

July 16. A six months old infant Sukhdeep Madar drowned in a tub of water in a farmers' cabin in the Fraser Valley.

July 18. The CFU wins its first certification at the Jensen Mushroom Farms.

July 25. Three young boys drowned in a pit in Aldergrove while their parents worked in the nearby farms.
        CFU did extensive mobilization for farmworkers' safety after these incidents.


Aug. 24. A large public meeting held in Abbotsford to discuss the issues of health and safety.

Sep. 9. Bell Farms in Richmond certified.

Oct. 1. In response to the CFU activities a group called the Fraser Valley Farmers' Association was formed.

Nov. 5. CFU president spoke at SFU on the issue of pesticides.
Nov. 19. The CFU sign its first contract with Bell Farms Ltd.

Dec. 5. CFU president Raj Chouhan and CUPW president Jean Claude Parrot addressed a meeting in Montreal. The meeting was organized by the Farmworkers' Support Committee at McGill.

Dec. 6. A support committee meeting in Toronto attended by CFU president.

During late Summer and Fall of 1980 the CFU Secretary Sarwan Boal spent a number of weeks organizing in the Okanagan Valley.

1981

Feb. 7. CFU organized a public meeting in support of Nicaragua. Nicaraguan Minister of Agriculture Francisco Campbell was the key speaker.

Mar. 5. Applied for certification at Fraser Valley.

Mar. 27. CFU's first convention. Affiliation with CLC rejected.

Mar. 29. Certification at Reimer's Nursery.

Mar. 30. Rally at Walter Moberly School to end the CFU' first convention.

Apr. 6-9. CFU representative attended meetings in Regina and Saskatoon.

Apr. 9. CFU members begin strike against the Country Farms Natural Foods Ltd. in Richmond.

Apr. 11. Cesar Chavez joined the picket line in Richmond.

Apr. 11. 600 people attended CFU's benefit dinner in Vancouver where the guest speaker was Cesar Chavez.


Apr. 20 CFU begins secondary picketing at Naam Restaurant in Vancouver.

May 12. Richmond City Council order CFU to remove its trailer from in front of the Country Farms.

June 14. In a "special convention" the CFU decides to affiliate with the CLC.

June 27. Signed first contract with Reimer Nurseries.

July 7. The Fraser Vale Nursery Farms certified.

Aug. 16. A public meeting by the CFU in Abbotsford.
Aug. 29. Demonstration at Robson Square.

Sep. 2. Raj Chouhan and Sarwan Boal attend the UFWA convention in California.

Sep. 10. The CFU applies for cabin access.

Sep. 27. The documentary "A Time To Rise" shown for the first time. In Vancouver's John Oliver Secondary School the labour song writer and singer Utah Phillips entertained more than 500 people before the screening of the film.

Sep. 29. CFU win the cabin access.

Oct. 4. A rally organized by the BCOFR is attacked by the CPC(ML). CFU organizers were attacked as well.

Oct. 17. Another rally is attacked by the CPC(ML). A number of people injured including some CFU organizers.

Nov. 9. Contract signed with the Fraser Vale Farms.

Nov. 16. CFU officials meet with provincial NDP Caucus.

Dec. 20. Public meeting in Abbotsford, "A Time To Rise" shown.

1982


Feb. 8. CFU won the court decision about the three drowned boys. The owner of the pit is fined.

Mar. 10. Calvin Sandborn and Raj Chouhan presented the Brief at IBT hearings on pesticides at Toronto.


Mar. 31. WCB announces the coverage of farmworkers to take affect on April 1, 1983.

May 21. CFU presents a Brief to the Human Rights Commission.

May, June, July

Cabin access. 18 to 20 volunteers visited cabins each week to organize the workers. Many mini scuffles with farmers and contractors took place.

July 3. A contractor's overloaded van overturned causing death and injury. CFU gets involved on behalf of the farmworkers.

July 9. CFU Secretary Sarwan Boal sent to jail for three days as a result of a court case arising out of the conflict with the CPCML.


July 30. After 15 months of deadlock a contract was signed with the Jensen Farms.

Aug. 18. In response to the CFU's long campaign changes in the UIC regulations announced.


Oct. 13. A study by David Lane with the help of CFU organizers, entitled "Agricultural Health and Pesticide Project" was released.

Oct. 30. Jarnail Singh Deol, a young farmworker dies of pesticide poisoning. CFU take up the fight.

Nov. 19. CFU President spoke at the annual convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Nov. 28. A public meeting organized in Surrey.

Dec. 20. CFU meeting in Toronto.
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Cavanagh, Judy.  
1983 A CFU staff member. Interviewed November 17, Vancouver.

1985 Again interviewed September 2, when no longer on the CFU staff. Vancouver.

Chouhan, Raj.  
1983 Founding President of the FWOC and later of the CFU. Interviewed October 21, Vancouver.

Dean, Karen.  
1985 A supporter, worked with Farmworkers' Legal Services in Abbotsford. Interviewed September 19, Burnaby, B.C.

Fleming, Mike.  
1985 A supporter. Currently on the CFU staff as a Fundraiser. Interviewed August 14, Burnaby, B.C.
Gill, Major.
1985 A supporter. Interviewed (in Punjabi) December 6. Mission B.C. (due to technical problems the conversation was not properly recorded).

Gill, Mohinder.
1985 A farmer and the President of the Fraser Valley Cole Crop Growers' Association. Interviewed October 4. Abbotsford, B.C.

Glavin, Terry.
1985 A journalist. He wrote extensively on the farmworkers' issue in its initial stages while with the now defunct *Columbian*. Currently with the *Vancouver Sun*. Interviewed August 12. Vancouver.

Horsting, Ted
1985 A long term farmer in the Mission area. Interviewed December 16. Mission, B.C. (due to technical problems the conversation was not properly recorded).

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Kube, Art.

Mahil, Harinder.
1985 A trade unionist and an activist in IPANA. Played an important role in creating farmworkers' initial contact with the trade union movement. Interviewed August 30. Vancouver.

Mukkar, Pritam Singh.

Sandborn, Calvin.
1985 A lawyer. Worked on the Fraser Valley Farmworkers' Legal Services Project. Author of several briefs about farmworkers' conditions especially on health and safety issues. Interviewed October 24. Vancouver.

Sandhu, Bachan Singh.

Sharma, Hari.
1986 A faculty member in the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology at SFU. A long time activist. One of the founding members of IPANA. Interviewed March 19. Burnaby, B.C.

Sidhu, Andy.
1985 Assistant Manager of Canada Farm Labour Pool Abbotsford.
Walia, Kishan.

White, Laurie.
1985 A former student activist from SFU. Interviewed September 16. White Rock, B.C.

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1981 Two striking mushroom pickers were interviewed on the picket line in Langley (in Punjabi) on April 20. Help was received from Amarjit Chahal. The interview was published in Punjabi Language Magazine Watno Dur. May/June, 1981:16-20.

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1982 Bulletin. Published occasionally.

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(Nov. 5) “Marchers win pledges from Bennet, Williams”. 2
1981 (May 25) “Speaking of mushrooms, what about East Indian farmlords?

Montreal Star
1979 (May 5) "Slave labor in the Fraser Valley". :3.

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1980 (Sep. 25) "Farmworkers gets backing from the big guns". 3

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1974  (Nov. 1) "Hearing urged to halt labour bosses who ship immigrants like kattle". :3.

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      (Aug. 9) "Union Disaster". 2.
      (Aug. 27) "Valley farm workers march despite rumor of violence". 2.
      (Nov. 5) "Angry farm workers face premier at convention". A14.

1980  (Apr. 6) "Farmworkers form new Union". 4.
      (Apr. 7) "Farm workers' union ready for long fight". 4.

1984  (Sep. 29) "Farm fight discrimination". A11.

1986  (Mar. 17) "Union leader steps down". A3.