Substantial numbers of Filipinos, such as the asparagus workers pictured here, began arriving in California in the mid-1920s. They suffered sporadic attacks by white farm laborers throughout the following decade. (*Courtesy of the Bank of Stockton Historical Photo Collection.*)

The federal government responded with a program of mass repatriation. Between 1931 and 1933, more than 400,000 Spanish-speaking persons were removed from the United States and sent to Mexico; included were Mexican aliens and American citizens of Mexican ancestry. Federal, state, and local authorities at first encouraged a voluntary exodus, but forced deportations also occurred. In California estimates of the number of deportees ranged from 75,000 to 100,000. The government of Mexico protested the indiscriminate apprehension and deportation of any person, regardless of citizenship, who "looked Mexican." And the *repatriados* and their families complained bitterly of mistreatment. As historian Albert Camarillo has observed, "The Chicano community did not passively accept the indignity heaped upon it by the governmental deportation drives." The pain of repatriation found expression in a poignant folk ballad:

Goodbye, my good friends,
You are all witnesses
Of the bad payment they give us.

Labor Strife

In the agonies of the depression, California's long tradition of social violence was reborn in new and bitter struggles between labor and employers.

California labor problems had always been at their worst in agriculture, partly

bargaining. When the depression turned most of the farm regions into economic disaster areas, labor relations became worse than ever before. Agricultural workers, ill-fed or unfed, had to suffer the peculiar misery of watching food crops rot because they could not be sold for enough to pay the costs of harvesting and marketing.

Women performed much of the most arduous work in the canneries—peeling, cutting, and pitting the fruit. And it was women who often took the lead in mobilizing discontented workers to protest unfair and oppressive conditions. Excluded from the protection of existing labor laws, women in the canneries worked 16-hour days for 15 cents an hour. When women cannery workers struck in the Santa Clara Valley in 1931, police responded by breaking up a mass meeting with tear gas and fire hoses. About half the officers of the newly organized United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America were women. Latinas were among its most effective leaders, including the union's vice president, Luisa Morena.

Again, as in the days of the IWW, the wretched conditions of the migratory agricultural workers and the general disinterest of conventional labor unions opened the door to the most extreme radicals, and the radicals played into the hands of the employers. The Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (CAWIU), which became active in 1933, was avowedly an arm of the Communist party and was openly eager to hasten the disintegration of the capitalist system in agriculture. It provided the leadership for the strikes of the grape pickers at Lodi, the cotton pickers in the southern San Joaquin Valley in 1933, and the vegetable pickers in the Imperial Valley in 1934. Employer vigilante groups, sometimes deputized by county sheriffs, did not hesitate to use violence in crushing these strikes, and the CAWIU was dissolved when its Communist leaders were arrested and convicted under the state criminal syndicalism law.

The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, in its famous section 7a, recognized the right of employees "to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing." In the San Francisco Bay region, where organized labor had once been strong, the unions took courage from the new federal law and set out to regain the power they had lost in the 1920s. When the employers resisted, the struggle became even more violent than in the agricultural regions. Class conflict went to such extremes that police and the National Guard were used to break a strike on the San Francisco waterfront, and in retaliation nearly all the unions in the bay region joined in a general strike in sympathy with the demands of the maritime workers.

The employers in the San Francisco shipping industry had destroyed the power of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) in the Bay Area by breaking its strike in 1919. They also had used the presence of radicals in several maritime unions as an excuse to destroy unionism itself. From 1919 until 1934, the only longshoremen's union in the San Francisco Bay area was the employer-controlled Blue Book union. Hiring was done under the "shape-up" system. The men gathered on the docks each day, and a hiring boss chose the ones who would get the day's work. The system was riddled with bribery, favoritism, and blacklisting.

A new local of the ILA was formed in San Francisco in the summer of 1933 and soon won practically all the workers away from the employer-controlled union.