their state's history should not have had to be reminded that Anglo-Americans with gold pans had not only performed the most backbreaking form of stoop labor ever invented, but had also insisted that *only* whites were suited for it.

As agribusiness clung to the braceros, public criticism slowly intensified. Agriculture was in the untenable position of being the only private industry insisting that the government was obligated to provide it with a labor supply, and a cheap one at that. At last, in 1963, Congress refused to approve the customary 2-year extension of the bracero program and instead ordered its termination at the end of the following year, with a few minor exceptions. The growers predicted disastrous shortages of harvest labor and warned consumers of food scarcities and drastic price increases. These predictions proved baseless; 1965 was another record year in California agricultural output, and food prices rose insignificantly or not at all. By offering better wages and working conditions, the growers were able to attract enough domestic labor and thus to refute their own perennial claims that it would be impossible to do so.

Unionization Breaks Through

Though the growers often denied that their desire for braceros was in any way related to their desire to block the organization of labor unions by domestic farm workers, the connection was inescapable and the growers used many of the same arguments for both purposes. Most of these arguments were variations on the traditional American political theme that farming was different from all other business enterprises.

Because the harvesting of perishable crops was intensely seasonal, one argument ran, growers required a "dependable" labor force and were uniquely vulnerable to strikes and therefore could never tolerate unions. This contention ignored a number of facts. Canning was equally seasonal, yet it had long been unionized with great advantage to the employers rather than any undue hardship to them. The marketing of perishable crops was as dependent on transportation workers as it was on harvest and cannery workers, yet the industries involved in the transportation of food had been entirely unionized for decades. Most of the employers in the canning, trucking, railroad, and shipping industries had long since tacitly conceded that union contracts were the best method of ensuring a dependable labor supply. A contention of California growers was that, like other "American farmers," they had always maintained a personal solicitude toward their hired hands and that this would be sacrificed in the "impersonal" process of union bargaining. This contention never had any validity as applied to the typical employer-employee relationships in the state's agriculture, where wage rates were set by growers' associations and where hiring was usually done through labor contractors who performed the functions of company unions.

Growers also declared that they believed in collective bargaining, but only with persons who actually worked for them, not with labor union officials, whom they almost invariably described as "outside agitators." But this was the same claim that employers in virtually every other industry had used in earlier times in efforts to block the beginnings of unions. It ignored the fact that collective bargaining

could not be genuine if workers were denied the right to choose experienced representatives as their bargaining agents. The growers wished to continue to hire such representatives of their own—the labor contractors—while continuing to deny any effective representation to the workers.

The most genuine objection of the growers to collective bargaining was that it was sure to raise costs. But not even this objection was valid, even on a strictly economic level. Higher wages would enable hundreds of thousands of American migrant-worker families to buy more food and at the same time would lower the costs of welfare and many other costs of poverty.

Extreme poverty and the disorganization that accompanied it had always been a major obstacle to organizing farm workers, who were generally regarded as too demoralized to be even potential union material. But in 1959 the nation's largest labor organization, the AFL-CIO, opened an offensive on the farm-labor front with a new Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC). The nucleus of the AWOC was the Filipino Farm Labor Union, organized 3 years earlier and led by Larry Dulay Itliong. He now spearheaded the effort to recruit members for the newly formed AWOC.

Soon afterward, César Chávez left a secure and comfortable job as an official of a Mexican American community service society to begin the hard and hazardous task of organizing a new and independent union called the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), at a salary of $50 a week. A cofounder of the union was Dolores Huerta, a labor organizer and community activist who was born in New Mexico and grew up in Stockton. Chávez had been born near Yuma, Arizona, on a small homestead near the Colorado River. This family farm was lost through unpaid taxes in the depression of the 1930s. He had worked as a migrant farm laborer from early childhood and consequently had obtained his 8 years of formal education with difficulty in nearly 40 different California public schools.

Chávez conceived the new NFWA as a labor organization that would offer its members the benefits of a credit union and other services while it offered employers a stable and dependable workforce made up of skillful and well-organized crews of NFWA members working with no-strike contracts. At that time he placed no hope in agricultural strikes, having seen too many disheartening examples of them, but in September 1965 AWOC members began a strike against grape growers in the district around Delano in northern Kern County, and 2 weeks later Chávez's NFWA decided to join it. For the first several months there seemed to be no chance that the strike could win. So many strikebreakers were brought in that the grape harvest in the district was larger than in the previous year. Yet the strike continued until, in the spring and summer of 1966, it won a series of brilliant victories that set a precedent for ultimate unionization of at least the larger farms throughout California.

If the Delano strike had been attempted a few years earlier, it would have met the fate of every previous attempt to organize farm labor. But now a new force was at work—the strong and increasing sympathy of a part of the Anglo-American public for the civil rights of ethnic minorities in general and farm workers in particular. The AWOC local in Delano, under Larry Itliong as regional director, consisted mainly of Filipino Americans, whereas most of the members of Chávez's NFWA were