

scholar. Chávez, however, knew that California was the key, and he next tackled the lettuce growers of the Salinas Valley, where labor conditions were as abominable as they had been in the Great Central Valley. Relying on the same tactics as before, the union achieved moderate success.

The UFW was suddenly forced to return to Delano in 1973. Upon the expiration of the old contracts, growers, ignoring Chávez, chose instead to sign new agreements with the Teamsters Union. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters had been expelled by the AFL-CIO in 1957. A maverick union, under the leadership of Jimmy Hoffa, it would be the only major working-class organization to support the Republican Party in the post-World War II period. Moreover, it was the only labor union to embrace the Bracero Program. Efforts to organize field hands were blatantly cynical since the Teamsters had little interest in these workers themselves; their overriding concern was the welfare of the truckers, who would be out of work without fruits and vegetables to transport. The Teamsters were intent on mobilizing campesinos to keep them *from* striking. Since their interests coincided with those of growers, the latter were anxious to end their association with the UFW and sign sweetheart contracts with the Hoffa union.

During the next few years, an acrimonious jurisdictional dispute erupted throughout the agricultural valleys of the West between the two competing unions. It was not resolved until California Governor Jerry Brown, whose sympathies lay with Chávez—the governor had studied three years in the fifties to become a Catholic priest—entered the fray and forced a compromise: the Teamsters would have jurisdiction over cannery and packing shed workers, the UFW would have free rein over field workers. Surprisingly, the truce held. The 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), which Governor Brown guided through the state legislature, helped the UFW initially. The union won almost half the 406 elections decided in the first few months. But Republican administrations in California, particularly under Governor Deukmejian, subsequently undermined its effectiveness, causing Chávez to regret his initial support of the legislation.

Unfortunately, successes were few and far between for Chávez during the next few years, as the public mood grew increasingly conservative, boding ill for both trade union and civil rights movements. The upsurge of undocumented workers brought unwelcome competition for agricultural jobs. Internal dissension compounded union problems. At the center of these bitter schisms was Chávez himself, whose authoritarian management style increasingly alienated even his closest collaborators.¹⁷ A series of purges further eroded morale. When Chávez died on April 23, 1993, the union was moribund, having lost 80 percent of its members during the previous decade.

The UFW rebounded under Chávez's son-in-law, Arturo Rodríguez, but by 1995, when there were an estimated 1.6 million farmworkers in the country,