

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

agriculturalists than analytical of their rise to prominence. Because the author relied heavily upon personal interviews with the preeminent farmers of the Red River Valley, his uncritical treatment of sources is especially harmful to the balance of the book. While Drache's book has limitations, it still provides a foundation for further detailed studies of the development of twentieth-century plains agriculture.

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Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960, by Ernesto Galarza. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977. pp. xvii, 405. \$11.95.

In the last pages of this book, Ernesto Galarza comments that ". . . the best history is that in which one had an effective part." (p. 350) *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960* is Galarza's account of his thirteen years of work in attempting to organize harvesters in California into effective labor unions. He represented the National Farm Labor Union, later the National Agricultural Workers Union, an offshoot of the older Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Because of their very strong feelings about how the work should be done, Galarza and his associates were often at odds with farmers and growers, with state and federal bureaucracy, and even with other labor unions.

Galarza maintains that his primary interest throughout his years in California were the welfare and increased bargaining power of the domestic laborers or *locales*. He felt that these people, given adequate opportunity, could provide a competent, dependable labor supply and would work their way up to decent living conditions. The major struggle of Galarza and the NAWU was for the repeal of Public Law 78, an act which enabled the United States government to import workers from Mexico on a temporary basis whenever agri-business leaders in California and other parts of the Southwest could prove a need for such a labor force. Galarza argues that these *braceros* were imported in large numbers under false pretenses because they would work for low wages and under conditions that the domestics would not accept. Therefore, he contends, the members of growers' associations used the law to benefit themselves, meanwhile depriving Ameri-

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can citizens of employment to which they were legally and morally entitled.

Galarza's work for the NAWU was done under extremely frustrating circumstances: lack of funds; the constant movement of union membership from one seasonal harvesting job to another; the use of *braceros* and illegals to replace striking farm workers; and the lack of aid and cooperation from leaders of other unions, government officials, and sometimes even the heads of his own union. He felt that his ultimate goal had to be the strength, independence, and integrity of the union which represented all of California's farm workers, but especially the domestic harvesters who were the core of his organization. His ultimate break with the National Farm Workers Union in 1960 came in response to the merger of NAWU with a branch of the AFL-CIO which Galarza felt would subordinate the interests of the harvesters to the aims of other union members, such as the packing-house workers.

The reader's progress is slowed somewhat by Galarza's writing style and by awkward choices of words. The extensive use of acronyms is occasionally confusing, as is the use of only last names of the constantly shifting cast of characters (although the latter is alleviated to a degree by a list of "Persons in the Action" at the front of the book). Most of Galarza's footnoted sources are newspaper accounts, government reports, and personal correspondence. He includes at the end a list of material for recommended reading, including books, government documents, and his own numerous writings on the problems of contemporary farm laborers.

Ernesto Galarza is not an historian, and this book is not written in the style of the traditional monograph. Although he is mainly interested in describing the struggle of the NAWU over a thirteen-year period, and thus keeps himself discretely in the background, the author very quickly makes the reader aware that he is getting only Galarza's side of the story. He makes little attempt to explain the views of the leaders of California agri-business, nor of the individuals in state and federal labor departments. While this is a fascinating account of union efforts among California's farm workers, one feels that the complete story will be known only when or if spokesmen for the other groups publish their accounts of events during the period 1947-1960.

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