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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Photographs by DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

HARD WORK: *At the end of the strawberry picking season, Isai Rios, 17, lugs muddy plastic out of a field in Carlsbad. He and his father were living in a camp with no water or electricity. Like many young farmworkers, he'd never heard of Cesar Chavez.*

Farmworkers Reap Little as Union Strays From Its Roots

The movement built by Cesar Chavez has failed to expand on its early successes organizing rural laborers. As their plight is used to attract donations that benefit others, services for those in the fields are left to languish.

By MIRIAM PAWEL
Times Staff Writer

First of four parts

Red letters flash inside the famous black eagle, symbol of the United Farm Workers: "Donate," the blinking message urges, to carry on the dreams of Cesar Chavez.

Bannered on websites and spread by e-mail, the insistent appeals resonate with a generation that grew up boycotting grapes, swept up in Chavez's populist crusade to bring dignity and higher wages to farmworkers.

Thirty-five years after Chavez riveted the nation, the strikes and fasts are just history, the organizers who packed jails and prayed over produce in supermarket aisles are gone, their righteous pleas reduced to plaintive laments.

NEW DIRECTION: *The UFW's focus has shifted under President Arturo Rodriguez, who keeps a portrait of Cesar Chavez, his father-in-law, in his office.*

What remains is the name, the eagle and the trademark chant of "Sí se puede" ("Yes, it can be done") — a slogan that rings hollow as UFW leaders make excuses for their failure to organize California farmworkers.

Today, a Times investigation has found, Chavez's heirs run a web of tax-exempt organizations that exploit his legacy and invoke the harsh lives of farmworkers to raise millions of dollars in public and private money.

The money does little to improve the lives of California farmworkers, who still struggle with the most basic health and housing needs and try to get by on seasonal, minimum-wage jobs.

Most of the funds go to burnish the Chavez image and expand the family business, a multimillion-dollar enterprise with an annual payroll of $12 million that includes a dozen Chavez relatives.

The UFW is the linchpin of the Farm Worker Movement, a network of a dozen tax-exempt organizations that do business with one another, enrich friends and family, and focus on projects far from the fields: They build affordable housing in San Fran-

[*See UFW, Page A28*]

DeLay Ends His Drive to Regain Post

Facing charges in Texas and in the glare of a lobbyist scandal, he says the GOP needs a new majority leader. He plans to seek reelection.

By MARY CURTIUS AND RICHARD SIMON
Times Staff Writers

DAVID J. PHILLIP *Associated Press*

REP. TOM DELAY: *"The job of majority leader is too important to be hamstrung by personal distractions," he said.*

WASHINGTON — Former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, indicted in Texas last fall and under scrutiny in a blossoming political scandal on Capitol Hill, abandoned on Saturday his effort to regain his leadership post.

His decision touched off a race to succeed him in a Republican Party beset by ethics problems. And it followed days of political turmoil and soul-searching within the GOP, sparked by Tuesday's guilty pleas to corruption-related charges by lobbyist Jack Abramoff, once a close DeLay associate.

In a letter released Saturday, DeLay said he agreed with growing calls among Republicans for a new, permanent majority leader to be chosen soon.

"The job of majority leader is too important to be hamstrung by personal distractions," a tired-looking DeLay said later in the day during a public appearance in his hometown of Sugar Land, Texas.

He also pledged to stay in Congress and run a "vigorous" campaign for reelection in November for the Houston-area seat he has held since 1984.

DeLay, for years widely viewed as Congress' most influential Republican, stepped down as majority leader after he was charged in September with violating campaign finance laws in Texas. Insisting he expected to be found not guilty early this year, DeLay said he would then seek to reclaim the post.

House Republicans — many of whom agreed with DeLay's assertion that the Texas charges were politically motivated — had been willing to give him time to resolve that case. Instead of naming a permanent successor in September, they appointed Rep. Roy Blunt of Missouri to be temporary majority leader.

One reason the party so supported him was his work over the last decade to increase campaign contributions to Republican coffers. Key to that was the "K Street Project," an initiative through which Washington's lobbying community was persuaded to increase their donations to the GOP.

Another reason was his abil-

[*See DeLay, Page A22*]

RELATED STORY

Analysis: The solution may cause more GOP problems. **A23**

A Donor Who Had Big Allies

DeLay and two others helped put the brakes on a federal probe of a businessman. Evidence was published in the Congressional Record.

By RICHARD A. SERRANO AND STEPHEN BRAUN
Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — In a case that echoes the Jack Abramoff influence-peddling scandal, two Northern California Republican congressmen used their official positions to try to stop a federal investigation of a wealthy Texas businessman who provided them with political contributions.

Reps. John T. Doolittle and Richard W. Pombo joined forces with former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas to oppose an investigation by federal banking regulators into the affairs of Houston millionaire Charles Hurwitz, documents recently obtained by The Times show. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. was seeking $300 million from Hurwitz for his role in the collapse of a Texas savings and loan that cost taxpayers $1.6 billion.

The investigation was ultimately dropped.

The effort to help Hurwitz began in 1999 when DeLay wrote a letter to the chairman of the FDIC denouncing the investigation of Hurwitz as a "form of harassment and deceit on the part of government employees." When the FDIC persisted, Doolittle and Pombo — both considered proteges of DeLay — used their power as members of the House Resources Committee to subpoena the agency's confidential records on the case, including details of the evidence FDIC

[*See FDIC, Page A24*]

The Suits Are All Wet at These Board Meetings

Forget golf, biotech executives and scientists go surfing to network and strike deals.

By DENISE GELLENE
Times Staff Writer

DEL MAR, Calif. — Rising before dawn, the head of Pfizer Inc.'s research lab in San Diego fills her thermos with coffee and follows the headlights of her Honda Element to the foot of 15th Street, where a beach parking lot is already filling up.

Catherine Mackey, 50, trudges in her wetsuit across the sand beneath a murky gray sky, a new surfboard under her arm. A few other surfers are already in the water, hoping to ride the 4-foot breakers to shore — and to network with people like Mackey.

In San Diego's booming biomedical industry, opportunity tends to come in waves — the kind found at La Jolla Shores or Black's Beach or Scripps Pier. Surfing has become a way to make contacts, get face time with the boss and arrange deals.

"It's the new golf," said 48-year-old biotech entrepreneur Laura Shawver as she prepared to join Mackey in the chilly water.

San Diego's biotech industry — surpassed only by research hubs in San Francisco and Boston — was born near the beach in La Jolla, where a critical mass of world-renowned research institutions are clustered — Salk Institute, Scripps Research Institute and Burnham Institute, along with UC San Diego.

It makes sense that people in the industry would discover surfing in a place with a mild climate and miles of pristine beaches. But the sport also seems suited to an unpredictable business marked by stunning highs and crashing lows.

The industry's passion for

[*See Surfing, Page A31*]

ALLEN J. SCHABEN *L.A. Times*

NETWORKING: *Polly Murphy and Laura Hershey head out to surf in Del Mar.*

Guns Flow Easily Into Mexico From the U.S.

By HÉCTOR TOBAR
Times Staff Writer

NUEVO LAREDO, Mexico — The most popular instruments of robbery, torture, homicide and assassination in this violence-racked border city are imported from the United States.

"Warning," reads the sign greeting motorists on the U.S. side as they approach the Rio Grande that separates the two countries here. "Illegal to carry firearms/ammunition into Mexico. Penalty, prison."

The signs have done little to stop what U.S. and Mexican officials say is a steady and growing commerce of illicit firearms in Mexico — 9-millimeter pistols, shotguns, AK-47s, grenade launchers. An estimated 95% of weapons confiscated from suspected criminals in Mexico were first sold legally in the United States, officials in both countries say.

Guns are the essential tools of a war among underworld crime syndicates that claimed between 1,400 and 2,500 lives in 2005, according to tallies by various newspapers and magazines.

The biggest criminals in Mexico are engaged in an arms race, with an armor-piercing machine gun as the new must-have weapon for the cartels fighting

[*See Mexico, Page A13*]

In Alito Battle, Issues of Presidential Power Thrust to Forefront

By DAVID G. SAVAGE
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Twenty years ago, a Reagan administration lawyer proposed that when the president signed a bill passed by Congress, he should use the occasion to declare how he interpreted it.

"The president's understanding of the bill should be just as important as that of Congress," wrote Samuel A. Alito Jr. in a 1986 memo. Spelling out those thoughts "would increase the power of the executive to shape the law," he added.

President Bush put that idea to work two weeks ago in a little-noticed statement that followed his signing of the much-celebrated McCain amendment, which forbids cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of prisoners here and abroad.

His words appeared to turn a legislative defeat into a White House victory. Bush said he would back the torture ban so long as it didn't conflict with his "constitutional authority" as commander in chief and his need to "protect the American people from further terrorist attacks."

Moreover, Bush asserted that the measure would preclude federal courts from hearing all claims of mistreatment from prisoners abroad, a point disputed by some Senate Democrats.

This week, as Alito goes before the Senate Judiciary Committee, it will be seen whether Bush's boldness in asserting powers of the presidency has

[*See Alito, Page A20*]

INSIDE

Weather: Mostly sunny and slightly cooler. Clear and locally windy tonight throughout the region. L.A. Downtown: 70/50. **B16**

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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Photographs by DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS: *Demitrio Lopez, 36, bathes in a creek near Del Mar in north San Diego County. Farmworkers also washed their work clothes in the creek, where they caught crayfish for food.*

Union Shifts Course, Loses Focus

[*UFW, from Page A1*]

cisco and Albuquerque, own a top-ranked radio station in Phoenix, run a political campaign in support of an Indian casino and lobby for gay marriage.

The current UFW leaders have jettisoned other Chavez principles:

The UFW undercut another union to sign up construction workers, poaching on the turf of building trade unions that once were allies.

The UFW forfeited the right to boycott supermarkets and stores, a tactic Chavez pioneered, in order to sign up members in unrelated professions.

And Chavez's heirs broke with labor solidarity and hired nonunion workers to build the $3.2-million National Chavez Center around their founder's grave in the Tehachapi Mountains, a site they now market as a tourist attraction and rent out for weddings.

A few hundred miles away, in the canyons of Carlsbad north of San Diego, hundreds of farmworkers burrow into the hills each year, covering their shacks with leaves and branches to stay out of view of multimillion-dollar homes. They live without drinking water, toilets, refrigeration. Fireworks and music from nearby Legoland pierce the nighttime skies.

In a larger camp a dozen miles to the south in Del Mar, farmworkers wash their clothes in a stream, bathe in the soapy water, then catch crayfish that they boil for dinner.

Scott Washburn was the last UFW organizer to work in the San Diego County camps; when he left in 1981, so did the food cooperative, armored trucks that cashed checks without charge, and doctors and English teachers who made regular visits.

"Man, it's sad down there," lamented UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, who has run the union since his father-in-law, Chavez, died in 1993.

Yet his union has done nothing to help.

In the fields, the only Cesar Chavez many farmworkers have heard of is the famous Mexican boxer. "I think right now it's one of those nice memories for the older people," Eliseo Medina, one of the most successful labor organizers in the country, said about the farmworker union he once helped lead. "It's just not the factor it should be, which is unfortunate. Because farmworkers desperately need a strong union."

Isai Rios has never heard of the UFW. At 17, Rios came to San Diego with his father from Oaxaca. They moved into the Carlsbad camp last spring to work in the strawberry fields across Cannon Road. Home is a shack made of plastic sheets tied to tomato stakes. The housing alternatives are overcrowded, costly and inconvenient — rented rooms in houses shared by as many as 30 people.

Each Sunday, church volunteers bring jugs of water, garbage bags, ramen noodles and toilet paper to the Carlsbad camp. A clearing just above the road serves as the meeting room, where Rios took Communion at the Wednesday evening Masses, listened to advocates explain basic rights such as overtime and breaks, and tried to learn simple English phrases from college students: "How are you?" and "I feel sick."

Fernando Bernadino is 33 and has a ninth-grade education, more than most of his co-workers in the Carlsbad camp. His Sunday routine is to pick up free Spanish-language papers while he does laundry in Oceanside, scrubbing hard at strawberry stains that won't wash out.

DAY'S END: *Strawberry picker Juan Ventura, 41, relaxes on his cardboard bed in a plastic shelter just over the hill from Legoland in Carlsbad. The rosaries and toilet paper were gifts from a church. He and two nephews earn minimum wage.*

He is the kind of worker who in another era might have been recruited to organize for the UFW. He reminds others to clean up garbage so the city will not bother the camps. He cooks most of his meals on a propane stove and packs lunch so he isn't dependent on the lunch trucks. He seeks out people who can tell him of his rights, and he helps advise others. He is careful to use clean water for drinking and bathing, and examined the vitamin C content of juice drinks before picking mango punch during a recent shopping expedition.

He has a wife and three children at home in Oaxaca, and he is not proud of how he lives here. He has read about Cesar Chavez and considers him a great leader.

"If he were here," he said, "things would be different."

A Man and His Cause Capture a Nation's Attention

On the quintessential American holiday, July 4, 1969, the drawing of a boyish face with a shock of dark hair and faintly Indian features filled the cover of Time magazine: Cesar Chavez and his grape boycott had become a national cause.

The short, rather unassuming leader compensated for his flat speaking style with a flair for dramatic gestures: In the midst of a 25-day fast to emphasize nonviolence, Chavez shuffled weakly past television cameras up the escalator of the Kern County Courthouse to comply with a summons. Days later, he broke the fast with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy by his side.

By the summer of 1973, as striking farmworkers filled jails, walked picket lines and faced violent confrontations with Teamsters, Chavez presided over the first convention of the United Farm Workers of America. The preamble to the new constitution spoke eloquently of the need for the union and the determination of its founders:

"We, the Farm Workers of America, have tilled the soil, sown the seed and harvested the crops. We have provided food in abundance for the people in the cities, the nation and the world but have not had sufficient food for our own children. . . . And just as work on the land is arduous, so is the task of building a union. We pledge to struggle as long as it takes to reach our goals."

In 2002, Chavez's heirs excised the preamble.

In 2006, the UFW does not have a single contract in the table grape vineyards of the Central Valley where the union was born.

Nor does it have members in many other agricultural swaths of the state: The union Chavez built now represents a tiny fraction of the approximately 450,000 farmworkers laboring in California fields during peak seasons — probably fewer than 7,000.

Precise numbers have always been elusive in an industry dependent on transient, often undocumented workers. The physically grueling, minimum-wage work has historically been the bottom-of-the-rung job for the newest immigrants, today overwhelmingly undocumented Mexicans and, increasingly, indigenous people from the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. Employers depend on the undocumented workers, who come north because it is so difficult to make a living back home.

Chavez publicized the oppressive conditions at a time when farmworkers lacked even toilets in the fields. Beginning with the Delano grape strike 40 years ago, the UFW combined picket lines with boycotts, sending farmworkers across the country to talk about their plight. They generated enormous public sympathy, and that translated into economic and political pressures that forced change.

Some gains have been lasting. Older farmworkers talk about learning that even without a union presence they could stand up for their rights. Laws brought farmworkers unemployment benefits, overtime, rest breaks and drinking water.

But the economic gains the UFW achieved have all but evaporated: In real dollars, the $6.75-an-hour minimum wage in California is less than what many farmworkers earned under UFW contracts in the 1980s.

Rodriguez, the UFW president, refused to release a list of contracts or even a number, saying some growers with union employees would face "peer pressure." He acknowledged there are not many contracts; estimates are between 20 and 30, including several outside California.

As the union lost contracts, the number of workers who qualify for UFW pensions or healthcare plummeted. Fewer than 3,000 farmworkers are covered by the union health plan during peak months, the plan administrator said. The pension plan has more than $100 million in assets, but pays pensions to only 2,411 retirees and has trouble finding more who qualify.

In 2002, assessing the bleak circumstances, the UFW board made a dramatic shift. It changed focus and chose to capitalize on the growing Latino population across the country. The board deleted all specific references in the UFW constitution to agricultural workers, including the preamble.

"Our overall goal is helping to improve the lot of 10 million Latinos by 2015. We're definitely going to go beyond farmworkers. What those industries are, how we do it, we don't know yet," Rodriguez said.

"We'll never leave our roots. We'll never abandon farmworkers by any means, or rural communities. But we certainly don't want to position the organization or the future of the organization to only be dependent on that. There are lots of needs out there that have to be met, and if we have the capacity to be able to do that, then shame on us if we don't."

More recently, as he attempts to leverage his union's position amid a split in the national labor movement, Rodriguez said he saw the UFW's role as organizing all "food-related" workers.

As part of the Latino strategy, the UFW signed up workers at a Bakersfield furniture store that subsequently went out of business and ran unsuccessful campaigns to represent hotel workers in Texas. UFW members today include Catholic parish workers in Brownsville, Texas, and workers who assemble prefabricated classrooms for a San Jose-based company.

After signing a contract to represent the assemblers, the UFW helped the company petition the state for a job-classification change that would have allowed the firm to pay lower wages on public jobs.

"I support the farmworkers trying to organize and make peoples' lives better, but when you cross the line and you start undermining other workers' wages, it's not acceptable," said Neil Struthers, head of the Santa Clara County building trades council, which successfully fought off the move. "They have more rights than we do to organize [farmworkers]. They're not organizing there. They're organizing whatever falls in their lap."

Other union leaders question the effectiveness of a pan-Latino approach.

"You're not going to build a union or a movement that way," said Medina, a farmworker who became a UFW leader in the 1970s and is now a national executive vice president with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). "You don't do it around ethnic lines. You do it around industries. I think what they're trying to do now is figure out where it's easier to maintain the institution."

Focus Is on Raising Money, Not Organizing in the Fields

On the wall of the cramped Santa Maria living room that doubles as his office, Pedro Lopez tacked a larger-than-life poster of Cesar Chavez.

"Every time I do things, I think of him," Lopez said.

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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Photographs by DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

UNION DRIVE: *Claudio Ramirez, 25, listens to a pitch from UFW organizer Lupe Martinez while on a half-hour break at Giumarra Vineyards in Arvin, near Bakersfield. Heat-related deaths in the fields had led to an effort to unionize, but in a vote, workers at Giumarra rejected the union.*

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But the young Oaxacan farmworker has no faith in the UFW.

In the summer of 1999, Lopez helped organize walkouts among Mixtec Indians in the strawberry fields of Santa Maria. He would drive his truck into the fields, climb on top and call workers out in roving strikes. With ripe berries rotting on the vines, startled strawberry growers quickly agreed to increase wages.

Lopez was fired from his job and blacklisted, but the strike only deepened his commitment to organizing. An elementary school graduate who left Mexico at 12, Lopez had only recently learned about Chavez. He called the UFW for help.

The union filed a complaint that successfully recovered back wages for Lopez and others. Then, at a meeting in Santa Maria, Lopez and others recall, UFW Secretary-Treasurer Tanis Ybarra pledged whatever support the workers needed to continue organizing — an office, telephones, a computer.

When Lopez and several leaders of the United Mixtec Farmworkers arrived a few weeks later at the UFW headquarters to work out the details, the story was different.

Anastacio Bautista, then vice president of the Mixtec group, was among those asked to wait outside while the UFW leaders talked to Lopez alone; they offered Lopez a job but said the union had no money to help his group organize in Santa Maria. And they asked for a decision on the spot. Ybarra recalls Lopez wanted a job; Lopez said he wanted organizing support but felt he needed at least a paycheck.

"Pedro abandoned us, but he had no other choice," Bautista said. "We lost faith. We didn't want to organize anymore."

Lopez worked for the UFW for six months but said it was difficult to generate interest in the union because it had not made good on the initial promises.

That did not stop the UFW from using the plight of Lopez's group to raise money.

"The United Mixtec Farmworkers turned to the United Farm Workers of America for help. Our goal is to restore rights and dignity to the Mixteco Indian farmworkers," a fundraising e-mail said. "Your gift of $25, $35 or even $50, would help provide legal and organizational support."

The UFW spent $940,000 last year on direct-mail fundraising appeals, its largest expense after salaries, according to tax returns. Donations account for almost one-third of the UFW's budget — more than $2 million a year — and consistently total more than member dues, which hover around $2 million.

Lopez never saw the letter about his own organization. Shown the fundraising appeal recently, he shook his head slowly. "That's not right," he said. "They didn't help.

"I believe they had the power to help, but they didn't want to. Why? I don't know. They want to do it the easy way. They want to come in when everything's already done. They don't want to spend any money."

California has the only law in the country that protects and regulates union representation for farmworkers, passed in 1975 to end the UFW's boycotts and strikes. But the law, which mandates quick elections if enough workers petition for them, is seldom used these days.

UFW leaders say the law is not enforced well enough to be effective in combating the power of employers, who have great control over workers' day-to-day lives.

"You really can't look a worker in the eye and say, 'If you stand with us, we have lawyers here who will protect you,' " said the UFW's chief counsel, Marcos Camacho.

Rather than making elections and contracts its primary focus, the UFW has concentrated on selling annual memberships for $40 a year to build grass-roots support. They remind workers that the laminated membership cards can be used for identification, something many undocumented workers lack.

Pedro Lopez is convinced that only contracts will protect the Santa Maria farmworkers. "Fear is the main problem," Lopez said. "But with a good guide, they'd lose the fear. When they get results, workers aren't scared."

In the garage of the small house where Lopez is raising five children, across from acres of vegetable fields, a handful of leaders of the United Mixtec Farmworkers meet each Saturday to strategize. They are not quite sure how to proceed, but they know they're on their own.

"The UFW says, 'Organize yourselves first,' "Lopez said. "People say, 'If we have to do that anyway, what do we need them for?' "

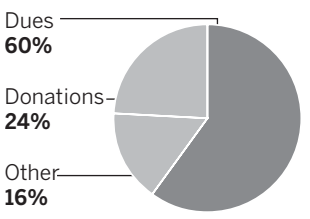
UNION CLASH: *When the National Farm Workers Service Center chose a nonunion contractor for a roofing project at a Bakersfield apartment complex, roofers union officials Joe Guagliardo, left, and Dario Sifuentes set up a protest sign. The Service Center relented and chose a union contractor's higher bid. "They didn't want my truck there," Guagliardo said.*

UFW budget

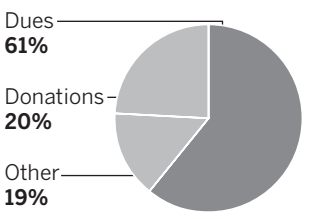
The UFW is an unusual union for its reliance on donations, which have grown in importance as the number of its labor contracts has declined. Dues, 2% of workers' wages, once made up as much as two-thirds of the total revenue.

Total revenues

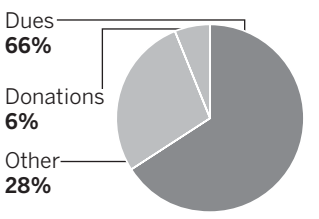
1971: $1.85 million
Initial wave of contracts that followed grape boycott.



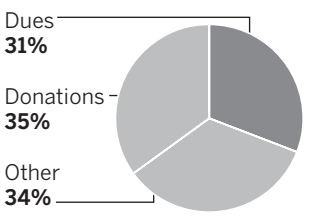
1978: $2.43 million
UFW grew after the 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which allowed farmworker union elections.



1982: $4.53 million
Peak in dues reflects wage increases after a 1979 vegetable strike.



2004*: $6.64 million
Dues have declined, reflecting about 20 to 30 contracts. UFW officials won't say how many.



2004 budget breakdown

Expenses total: $7,216,385			
Officers' compensation	$548,094	Rent	310,961
Other payroll	2,406,984	Telephone	225,805
Professional fees (legal, accounting, consulting)	1,027,481	Affiliation with AFL-CIO	163,996
Direct mail (fundraising)	819,249	Conferences	144,372
Travel/vehicle	395,275	Postage	96,370
		Other	1,077,798

Net assets: $1,523,066

Revenues total: $6,638,239	
Donations	$2,295,943
Dues	2,074,575
AFL–CIO organizing support	693,000
Services**	535,766
Fees***	444,446
Sale of supplies	210,368
Sale of real estate	197,000
Events	92,034
Supporting memberships	47,376
Other	47,731

* Most recent data available
** Payments from other nonprofits in the movement for services such as accounting, human resources and technical support.
*** Includes payments for running political campaigns and for member services provided to the pension and health funds.

Source: Annual Form LM2 reports to the U.S. Department of Labor. Graphics reporting by MIRIAM PAWEL

LORENA IÑIGUEZ *Los Angeles Times*

Social Services Funding for Farmworkers Goes Unspent

The goal of the Martin Luther King Farm Workers Fund could not have been clearer: The foundation was "irrevocably dedicated" in 1976 to providing healthcare, education and social services for farmworkers.

The UFW leaders were so committed that they made the MLK Fund a standard part of contracts: Employers had to pay a nickel per hour to fund "campesino centers" that would help navigate life outside the fields.

The money has not been spent on farmworkers in more than a decade.

For years, tax returns show the fund has had about $10 million, which sits accumulating interest. Each year, the board doles out a small percentage — the minimum required by law to maintain its tax-exempt status — to support the operations of the Farm Worker Movement.

In 1995, UFW leaders renamed the fund the Cesar E. Chavez Community Development Fund, said Paul Chavez, chairman of the foundation and Cesar's son.

The fund also lent money to help the National Farm Workers Service Center, a UFW affiliate, rehabilitate an apartment complex — in the hills of San Francisco, nowhere near the fields.

"It's the money that was paid for our work," protested Rosario Pelayo, a former UFW leader who picked grapes and vegetables for 20 years and is angry about what happened to payments the union negotiated as a benefit for workers.

When the UFW was focused on organizing farmworkers in the 1960s and 1970s, the union operated its own health clinics and credit union, and offered legal assistance, immigration counseling, social service referrals and income tax preparation.

Today one UFW affiliate, the Farmworker Institute for Leadership and Development, offers two English classes; although farmworkers attend for two hours each evening after work, the classes always have long waiting lists.

Services that were once free are now offered for a price by UFW leaders who use their union credentials to help attract business. Camacho, the chief counsel, recently opened a law office in Glendale that specializes in immigration cases; he advertised for business with a full-page insert in the program at the 40th reunion of the UFW in September.

The UFW-affiliated radio station offers one weekly call-in show on health issues — hosted by a Bakersfield doctor who has paid the station rates as high as $300 an hour for the time.

The tasks of providing legal advice, immigration counsel and healthcare for farmworkers today falls largely to ad hoc coalitions of nonprofit groups and volunteers.

In the fields of northern San Diego County, medical care is a 28-year-old physician assistant in the North County Health Clinic van that comes by the largest camp every few months, with a driver who doubles as recordkeeper and fills out the forms for those who can't write their own names. Blood and urine samples are taken, but it is often hard to find patients to give them the test results.

On a midsummer afternoon, farmworkers straggle back into the dusty Del Mar camp, arriving on foot, by bike, seven in a car. As the mobile van closes up at 5:30, the line out the door is almost as long as the 15 patients the medical staff treated during the two-hour visit.

Built by Nonunion Labor, Homes Not for Farmworkers

Over the last 15 years, the National Farm Workers Service Center has raised $230 million to buy or build more than 3,500 housing units for lower-income families in California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

Very few are for farmworkers.

Almost all have been built with nonunion labor.

"It's a tricky one," said Paul Chavez, who has run the charity since being tapped as president by his father in 1990. "We do the best we can. You should honor labor; you should help poor people."

Paul Chavez said that only by paying lower, nonunion wages can he hope to meet the Service Center's ambitious goal of housing 100,000 people in the next decade. The organization provides housing and services for lower-income families, who work mostly in service, retail and construction jobs.

In many places, Chavez said, it is difficult to find union contractors willing to bid on projects, though the Service Center does solicit bids.

That wasn't the problem in Bakersfield in November.

When the Service Center rejected a union roofing contractor's bid as too high, roofers union official Joe Guagliardo denounced it as a double standard, saying farmers use the same rationale to oppose the UFW.

"United Farm Workers Are Hypocrites — Shame," read the banner Guagliardo draped from his truck, which he parked outside UFW headquarters one weekend. The Service Center reversed itself and told the union its roofer would get the job on the Bakersfield apartment complex. "They didn't want my truck there," Guagliardo said. "Bad for business."

Rodriguez, the UFW president, said he was sympathetic to the Service Center's dilemma. "To me, we've got to serve the needs of poor people. That's what this organization is about," he said.

Like the Bakersfield project, most of the Service Center housing projects are not aimed at farmworkers, whose low salaries and intermittent work make them less desirable tenants.

Paul Chavez said he will probably follow a recommendation from a strategic retreat: Change the name of the National Farm Workers Service Center's housing arm to something without "Farm Workers" because it confuses people. "It's the same problem as Kentucky Fried Chicken," he said, referring to the fast-food chain's concern that its name would be incongruous when it launched a line of nonfried food. "So they call it KFC."

Seasonal work and low incomes make it difficult to finance farmworker housing projects without major subsidies, said Manuel Bernal, a housing expert Chavez brought in a few years ago to run the department.

"You don't have any continuous income to finance the mortgage. That's why we've basically stayed out of it," he said. "Second, even if you had the income, there's been a concern — more than a concern, a lesson learned — that farmworkers may not necessarily want to spend the money to live under our

[*See UFW, Page A30*]

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

A LIGHT MOMENT: *Two teenage farmworkers keep warm on a Sunday evening, their only day off each week. Their shacks were made of plastic and wood scavenged from the Del Mar tomato farm where they worked. Farmworkers in the camp tended to gravitate toward others from the same Mexican locales, forming neighborhoods of a sort. One canyon housed a dozen families from Guerrero state.*

Union Farm Contracts Grow Fewer

[*UFW, from Page A29*]

housing model because they'd rather save to send the money back home."

Decent, affordable housing is one of the most critical needs for farmworkers across California. The real estate boom has made sheds, garages, overcrowded apartments and shacks even more common accommodations.

A bargain in Salinas is a tiny one-bedroom apartment for a family of four in a 1950s labor camp with a board where the window should be and a hole in the roof. The tenant, who once organized her neighbors to protest poor conditions, is now afraid to complain for fear she would be evicted or the camp shut down; she could not find another place to live for the $450 a month she pays in rent.

In San Diego, a coalition of advocates, lawyers and religious leaders has been trying for years to work out a plan with the city of Carlsbad to build housing for farmworkers who live in shacks in the hills. So far, each proposal has been defeated by community opposition.

In the sprawling Del Mar camp where hundreds of farmworkers live at the height of the season, neighborhoods are defined by Mexican hometowns. The trees provide camouflage, hiding the shacks, while their branches double as closets. Frying pans, toothbrushes and plastic bags stuffed with clothes dangle from limbs.

One afternoon, three friends built a home from scrap lumber scavenged from construction sites; it took 10 minutes to cut one two-by-four because the handle kept coming off the ancient, rusted saw.

Jose Gonzalez, who lived in the camps when he first came from Oaxaca two decades ago, now works as a night manager at Rite Aid and spends his spare time trying to help more recent arrivals. He worries most about drinking water and pesticide contamination. "In jail we have criminals who have better living conditions," he said. "Why can't we do that with the hard-working people?"

Banking on the UFW Brand to Build Political Clout

In 1998, political consultant Richard Ross showed UFW leaders a statewide poll of Latino voters. The UFW ranked at the top as a name to trust.

"Richie just said, 'This is gold,' " UFW Political Director Giev Kashkooli recalled.

From then on, the union has been selling its brand.

In 1999, the union began running political campaigns as a business. Since 2000, the union and several related nonprofits have received close to $1 million from state campaign committees alone, a combination of civic donations and payments for election help.

Most unions contribute money to candidates; the UFW collects it instead. Most unions give money to their political action committees; the United Farm Workers PAC pays the union.

"We're unusual in that we actually get paid to run campaigns," Kashkooli said.

The UFW frequently works on campaigns in areas where it does not have members but ranks high in polls, such as Long Beach, and where candidates believe the affiliation will help their cause. They are often campaigns advised by Ross, a lobbyist who also works for the UFW.

In Calexico last spring, for example, the Viejas Indians paid the UFW $75,000 to run a campaign to win approval for a casino in the Imperial Valley city. Rodriguez sent letters urging support and enclosing a UFW pin with an eagle.

"I have a very soft spot for the union; it was kind of a blow to see that we were on opposite sides of the fence," said Mary Rangel-Ortega, an Imperial County educator who led the losing fight against the measure.

Politicians at all levels of office routinely contribute to the annual Chavez Foundation fundraising dinners, turn out for the walkathons and buy ads in the programs for the UFW conventions. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is featured prominently on the UFW website advertising "Sí se puede" wristbands.

Political clout has also helped the farmworker movement obtain public funds — more than $10 million in state money alone in recent years, not counting low-interest housing loans and tax credits.

"The union was able to help us build the political support for the funding," said Andres Irlando, who recently stepped down as president of the Chavez Foundation, which has been awarded more than $5 million in state grants to build a visitor center, memorial garden and retreat center around the UFW headquarters where Chavez lived and worked.

In 2002, the union used its political strength to achieve a major legislative victory, a law that imposes mandatory mediation if contract negotiations reach an impasse at a farm where the union has won an election to represent the workers. The UFW reported spending $241,432 on lobbying that year, money that paid for lobbyists and mass demonstrations to pressure then-Gov. Gray Davis to sign the bill — a 10-day march and chartered buses to bring supporters to the Capitol.

The UFW has invoked the law only once, although there are dozens of companies to which it could apply. Union officials said they are waiting to see if it withstands a court challenge.

Rodriguez, the union president, said politics has become an important part of the UFW's work. "We take the positive things that we've been blessed with — Cesar's image and the name and the reputation and the symbol of the black eagle — and we utilize that to empower Latinos," Rodriguez said. "We've not necessarily branded it that way, but others have branded this as a symbol for Latino empowerment."

That effort helps the entire labor movement, said John Wilhelm, president of the hospitality division of the labor union Unite Here: "I think that the moral authority of the farmworkers has never been questioned and I think that's of tremendous value at a time when the labor movement is not well regarded by lots of people in society."

Rodriguez moves comfortably in the world of politics and power and was proud of his role in negotiating regulations to mitigate extreme heat stress last summer. The new rules were announced at a joint news conference with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, after several farmworkers collapsed and died during unusually hot weather.

The heat-related deaths gave the UFW an organizing opportunity as well as a political one. Workers at Giumarra Vineyards, angered by the deaths and poor working conditions, had come to the union asking for help. The UFW attempted late last summer to win an election to represent the workers, in the heart of table grape country.

The night before the Sept. 1 vote, the union president was in Sacramento, hosting a fundraiser for the UFW Foundation. Formerly named the Farm Workers Health Group when it helped fund health services, the nonprofit organization now has no clear mission. Rodriguez, president of the board, said it might focus on immigration issues.

The invitations for the September fundraiser said contributions would go to a nonpartisan fund to help register farmworkers to vote, but Rodriguez described the purpose differently. He thanked the donors for their support and talked about using the money to fight for immigration reform. He mentioned the Giumarra vote and talked confidently about prevailing as he mingled with supporters. "Pray for us tonight because we have a big election tomorrow," he said.

The next day, in Sacramento, a gay-marriage bill passed the Senate. Sponsors attributed key votes to public support from the UFW and the union's aggressive lobbying of Latino lawmakers. While the legislators were approving gay marriage, farmworkers at the country's largest table grape company were rejecting the UFW.

About This Series

TODAY: The UFW betrays its legacy as farmworkers struggle.

MONDAY: The family business: Insiders benefit amid a complex web of charities.

TUESDAY: The roots of today's problems go back three decades.

WEDNESDAY: A UFW success story — but not in the fields.

On the Web

For additional photos, visit *latimes.com/ufw*.

Offering Laborers a Helping Hand

Farmworkers now depend on volunteers and aid groups for food, water, medical care and legal advice.

By MIRIAM PAWEL
Times Staff Writer

CARLSBAD, Calif. — They call her the rice and beans lady.

Eight years ago, Barbara Perrigo loaded up her car with homemade food and pulled up at a clearing on the side of Cannon Road, less than a mile from the turnoff for Legoland. She sent her sons into the scrubby bushes, down steep paths dotted with hidden shacks, shouting "comida," or "food."

Perrigo has been there every Sunday since, feeding as many as 60 farmworkers at the peak of strawberry season.

Mike Wischkaemper was a local lawyer who knew nothing about the farmworkers living in the camps except that Carlsbad residents opposed proposals to find more permanent housing. Dorothy Johnson, an attorney who runs the California Rural Legal Assistance office in Oceanside, invited him to meet with some of the people her organization was fighting to help.

The experience made him a convert; he learned Spanish and organized water handouts on Sundays and English classes Tuesday nights at the local church.

Perrigo, Johnson and Wischkaemper are mainstays of the loose support network for farmworkers in north San Diego County, where many live in plastic-and-plywood shelters nestled in the canyons. The three help meet basic needs — food, clean water, rides, medical help in a crisis — and offer advice — how to figure out if growers are paying overtime correctly, how to file income tax returns.

Others help fill the roles once played by the United Farm Workers. Volunteers offer improvised English lessons. Two former farmworkers from Oaxaca translate from Mixteco, a lifeline for workers who don't even speak Spanish or know any written language. Lunch truck operators sell food, extend credit, translate documents and call for help.

When a worker fell in the tomato fields recently and separated his shoulder, the lunch truck owner known as El Guerrero — because he comes from the Mexican state of Guerrero — called the legal assistance office to make sure someone knew the injured man needed help.

Johnson and her staff of three, part of CRLA's statewide network of 22 offices, provide the most broad-based legal support, focusing on workplace rights, although federal funding limits the organization to helping documented workers. Johnson has also been a leader in efforts to negotiate a better housing solution for the farmworkers.

Monthly meetings sponsored by the legal assistance group offer workers a respite from the monotony of the fields, along with practical advice.

One night, farmworker Fernando Bernadino good-naturedly let co-workers paste red dots all over him indicating spots where they thought he would hurt after a day in the fields, a prelude to experts demonstrating ways to lessen the daily pain.

DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

A WELCOME SIGHT: *Barbara Perrigo has served home-cooked food out of her car every Sunday for five years, feeding as many as 60 farmworkers a day.*

Usually the North County Health Clinic's van parks outside the meetings; last year the clinic equipped the van with a dental office as well. Many farmworkers have never seen a dentist.

Rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and AIDS are far above average. If tests are positive, the health workers will call Juan Ramon or Jose Gonzalez, friends who lived together for about five years in the camps of San Diego when they first came from Oaxaca to Southern California more than two decades ago. Gonzalez, who is trilingual, works as a night manager at Rite Aid and also as a certified court interpreter in Spanish and Mixtec.

"You have to really think about leaving a fingerprint," he said. He wants new immigrants to know their rights, things it took him years to learn. "It's their choice. If they want to demand their rights, it's them that's going to do it. We will support them."

Sometimes issues in the camps are more basic: How to throw out the garbage that piles up in the canyons, mounds of boxes, papers and beer cans. Perrigo brings trash bags, Wischkaemper explains the need to keep the camp clean and charges Bernadino with making sure each worker brings out a full bag of trash. Perrigo carts the bags away.

Johnson, the CRLA lawyer, began helping farmworkers more than three decades ago as a UFW volunteer when she left her Seattle home and camped out on the floor of the then-UFW headquarters in Delano. She remembers looking at the first contracts the union negotiated and being surprised that things she took for granted were considered major victories.

"And 35 years later," she said, "we're still fighting over bathrooms and water."

Los Angeles Times

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COLUMN ONE

Mission Missing Its Mark

■ Many Haitians say the U.N. effort does little to make their streets safer or their economy stronger. One notable beneficiary: the rich.

By CAROL J. WILLIAMS
Times Staff Writer

LEOGANE, Haiti — A cloud of condensation billows out from the shipping container into the tropical morning air as Col. Henry Premanta Mihindu throws open the door. Inside, crates of Wenatchee Valley apples, crisp bell peppers and California carrots fill a cold storage unit the size of a train car.

Beside it, another container holds cases of U.S. beef, New Zealand lamb and Arkansas chicken parts. Except for a few rare herbs that grow only in their faraway homeland, cooks with the Sri Lankan peacekeepers can get everything from the United Nations' supply network that they need for their spicy native dishes.

Outside the cinderblock wall separating the peacekeepers' tidy base from a busy coastal roadway, Renette Thermitus hunches over a sputtering gas-bottle burner, stirring a dented pot of canned milk and coffee. Like the sack of rolls that she rose before dawn to bake, the tepid beverage has no takers.

"They never buy anything from us," said the 23-year-old single mother, nodding her head to indicate the base housing hundreds of soldiers here in the poorest country in the hemisphere.

A seaside town of a few thousand with its own food shops and produce markets, Leogane had expected to benefit from being host to one of the biggest contingents of foreign soldiers scattered across this violence-racked country.

But the Sri Lankan camp, like all others that make up the 7,300-strong U.N. military deployment in Haiti, is as self-contained as a spaceship.

The staggering cost of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH, eclipses Haiti's entire $380-million annual national budget. That price tag, and the peacekeepers' interpretation of their mandate as assistants to fledgling Haitian police rather than primary law enforcers, grates on the purported beneficiaries.

"What I don't like about them is that they are at ease. They don't need anything. They eat well. They sleep well. They play cricket. It's like they're here on vacation," said Fedner Sanon, an unemployed teacher. "That's why we call them TOURISTAH."

Although the troops are authorized by the U.N. Security Council to intervene with force to quell violence, their commanders have chosen to interpret the mandate in a minimalist fashion. The U.N. has specifically charged

[*See Haiti, Page A4*]

ROBERT DURELL *Los Angeles Times*

Reflecting on Bay's Island Treasure

Environmental activist Ruth Gravanis pauses during a walk on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. After more than a decade of effort, San Francisco officials are preparing to unveil proposals to create a small city on the man-made island, a former naval station. **B1**

Hopes Founder on 'Big Lie'

Scientific scandal has shattered the vow made by a South Korean veterinarian that cloned stem cells would help a paralyzed boy walk.

By BARBARA DEMICK
Times Staff Writer

SIHEUNG, South Korea — The boy who became known as "Donor 2" was propped up in a wheelchair when a team of esteemed scientists strolled into his hospital room nearly three years ago.

Nine-year-old Kim Hyeoni had been hit by a car while crossing the street the previous year. Once a chubby-cheeked child who loved baseball and practical jokes, he now was paralyzed from the chest down.

"Sir, will I be able to stand up and walk again?" he asked the leader of the team, a South Korean veterinarian named Hwang Woo Suk, according to an account by his father.

JINNA PARK *For The Times*

FAITH SURVIVES: *"We believe in God, not Hwang," says Kim Je Eon, father of a boy known as "Donor 2."*

"I will make you walk. I promise," replied Hwang, who would soon afterward announce a breakthrough in the cloning of human stem cells.

With that meeting in April 2003, Hyeoni in effect became a poster boy in the quest to use cloned stem cells for experimental treatments of spinal-cord injuries.

His father, a Methodist minister, defied the beliefs of many of his fellow church members and allowed Hwang to cut skin samples from his son's abdomen for the research. Hyeoni's mother, a nurse, volunteered for the invasive procedure of having her eggs extracted to donate to Hwang's laboratory.

Now the family is faced with the sinking realization that "it was all a big lie," said Kim Je Eon,

[*See Stem cells, Page A8*]

U.S. Crash in Iraq Kills 12

All on the chopper are believed to be American. Five Marines are also slain, bringing the four-day military death toll to as high as 28.

By CHRIS KRAUL AND BORZOU DARAGAHI
Times Staff Writers

BAGHDAD — A U.S. helicopter with 12 passengers and crew members crashed in northern Iraq, killing all on board, the military command said Sunday. In addition, five Marines were reported killed in action, bringing to as many as 28 the number of American troops slain in Iraq since Thursday.

The crash of the UH-60 Black Hawk military chopper late Saturday was the deadliest in Iraq since a transport helicopter went down in January 2005 near the Jordanian border, killing 30 Marines and a sailor.

A spokesman for U.S.-led forces would not confirm the nationality or the identity of those killed in the Black Hawk pending notification of next of kin. "At this time we believe all the victims were U.S. citizens," the spokesman said.

The cause of the crash was under investigation, and it was not immediately known whether the aircraft came under fire from insurgents. A military spokesman noted, however, that the Black Hawk went down amid high winds and heavy rainfall.

There have been nearly two dozen fatal helicopter crashes in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion began in March 2003, and at least 144 people have died in them, according to Associated Press. Some of the wrecks have been accidents, others the result of hostile fire.

The Black Hawk helicopter was one of two on night operations Saturday and had lost radio contact with the other aircraft before crashing in a sparsely populated area about eight miles east of Tall Afar, a city near Mosul.

The military often flies missions at night, including the transport of troops via helicopter. But aviation experts say darkness can complicate making an emergency landing, difficult in a chopper under the best of circumstances.

"Helicopters are fairly unstable vehicles that need constant pilot attention," said Peter Field, a Vietnam War-era Marine colonel and former director of the Navy's test pilot school in Patuxent River, Md. "Flying over the vacant desert at night would pose a little bit more of a task for the pilot."

Field, now serving as a St. Louis-based civil aviation con-

[*See Iraq, Page A6*]

At Border, Fatal Shot Still Rings

The U.S. says its agent responded to an assault. But in Mexico, outrage over a father's death leads to demands for an inquiry and justice.

By RICHARD MAROSI
Times Staff Writer

TIJUANA — From his rickety apartment in the shanty-lined hills of Colonia Libertad, Giovanni Rubio said he witnessed a Border Patrol agent fatally shoot a man who had crossed onto U.S. soil.

"We want him electrocuted, and we want to watch," said Rubio, 22, referring to the agent whose actions sparked an international furor.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, visiting San Diego last week, offered his own take on the increasingly volatile situation on the border: "Anybody who assaults an agent is asking for trouble."

The differing reactions to the shooting on one of the most violence-prone stretches along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico illustrate the deepening cultural gulf between two nations separated by an increasingly fortified frontier.

While Mexican politicians have condemned the shooting and demanded a federal investigation, the U.S. response has been restrained, punctuated by outbursts of tough talk.

"When something tragic like this happens, it's something that

[*See Shooting, Page A19*]

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

KEY PLAYERS: *UFW head Arturo Rodriguez and fiancee Sonia Hernandez applaud during a grape strike commemoration.*

Linked Charities Bank on the Chavez Name

The union-related philanthropies enrich one another, operating like a family business.

By MIRIAM PAWEL
Times Staff Writer

Second of four parts

KEENE, Calif. — Paul Chavez lives a stone's throw from the two-bedroom home where he grew up and his mother still resides. His commute is a short walk across a bucolic compound here in the Tehachapi Mountains to the nondescript building where he oversees charities founded by his father, Cesar Chavez.

Down the hall, Paul's brother-in-law, Arturo Rodriguez, runs the United Farm Workers union and several related charities. Rodriguez also lives on the sprawling grounds, as does Paul's younger brother, Anthony, who runs radio stations owned by a UFW affiliate.

Paul's sister Liz works here too. She learned accounting as a teenage volunteer and went to work after high school for the movement her father ran. Today she is comptroller for the UFW and also handles the finances of several charities.

From their remote perch amid rolling hills and gnarled oaks 30 miles east of Bakersfield, Cesar Chavez's heirs run a thriving family business that has prospered even as the labor union has floundered. They have capitalized on the Chavez name and developed a complex financial web that helps enrich the organizations they oversee.

In dollars, energy and passion, the charities are the heart of the network known as the Farm Worker Movement. Between them, Rodriguez and Paul Chavez head more than a dozen tax-exempt groups that bring in $20 million to $30 mil-

[*See Charities, Page A16*]

RELATED STORY

Real estate deals: Insiders gain in nonprofits' property sales. **A18**

GOP Puts Lobbying Scandal in Bull's-Eye

Amid federal probes, Rep. Dreier is drafted to target influence peddlers on Capitol Hill.

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Moving to distance themselves from a growing corruption scandal, House GOP leaders Sunday chose Rep. David Dreier (R-San Dimas) to lead a crash effort to draw up legislation aimed at curbing the influence of lobbyists.

Dreier, the chairman of the House Rules Committee, flew back to Washington from California after House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) asked him to take on the high-profile assignment.

"We want to deal with this issue and get it behind us as quickly as possible," Dreier told Fox News before heading to the airport. Several proposals from members of both parties already have been introduced.

The announcement of Dreier's assignment came as Rep. John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, and Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), the acting majority leader, said that they were entering the race to succeed Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas).

DeLay stepped down as House majority leader in September after being indicted on money-laundering charges in his home state. He said Saturday that he would not seek to regain his leadership position.

On Sunday, in DeLay's first television interview since his an-

[*See GOP, Page A19*]

Polar Bears Face New Toxic Threat: Flame Retardants

By MARLA CONE
Times Staff Writer

MARLA CONE *Los Angeles Times*

FRIENDLY: *Andy Derocher, a scientist with the Norwegian Polar Institute, gets a close look at a 4-month-old polar bear cub.*

Already imperiled by melting ice and a brew of toxic chemicals, polar bears throughout the Arctic, particularly in remote dens near the North Pole, face an additional threat as flame retardants originating largely in the United States are building up in their bodies, according to an international team of wildlife scientists.

The flame retardants are one of the newest additions to hundreds of industrial compounds and pesticides carried to the Arctic by northbound winds and ocean currents. Accumulating in the fatty tissues of animals, many chemicals grow more concentrated as larger creatures eat smaller ones, turning the Arctic's top predators and native people into some of the most contaminated living organisms on Earth.

In urban areas, particularly in North America, researchers already have shown that levels of flame retardants called polybrominated diphenyls, or PBDEs, are growing at a rapid pace in people and wildlife. Although they have been found in much lower concentrations in the Arctic, scientists say their toxic legacy will persist there for

[*See Polar Bears, Page A20*]

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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Union's Clout Nets Tax Dollars

[*Charities, from Page A1*]
lion a year. Their primary business is to build and manage affordable housing projects, run Spanish-language radio stations and invest in projects that burnish the image of Cesar Chavez.

A charity does not pay taxes because it serves a public good. Charities are legally required to get the best value for the people they serve.

Instead, the Farm Worker Movement operates more like a family business, making financial decisions in order to expand the enterprise and enhance the founder's reputation.

The entities enrich one another, buying services from each other that are not necessarily the best available deal. The various organizations reported paying more than $1 million to the UFW-sponsored health plan in 2004, for example — insuring hundreds of employees in a fund that was designed to help farmworkers but now has only a few thousand participants because the UFW membership has dwindled.

The UFW and its related charities do business with friends. Records show they have sold real estate at below-market rates without seeking independent appraisals or opening up the bidding process; in one case, insiders resold a parcel for a $1.1-million profit.

The charities prop up the labor union, which struggles for members. The affiliated organizations buy services such as accounting and human resources — yielding more than $500,000 in income for the UFW in 2004 — although several state reviews have criticized financial management provided by the union.

The Farm Worker Movement's financial strategy flows from a mission statement adopted a few years ago: Change the world by achieving economic and social justice and help 10 million Latinos by the year 2015.

"Before the vision statement, I was going crazy. I was thinking, 'I'm not doing my part,' " said Paul Chavez, who worried because his charitable efforts were not aimed primarily at farmworkers. "Now I can go to bed at night knowing that while I feel for the union and I want them to grow and all that, I understand that my contribution has to be made on the service side."

The bulk of the movement's income is on the side of the ledger that Chavez oversees. He runs the National Farm Workers Service Center, which collects rents on the apartments it owns and operates, along with fees for housing development and management, and revenue from radio ads and sponsorships.

In 2003, for example, the Service Center earned $10.8 million from managing property and $6.8 million from the radio stations and spent roughly the same amount operating those enterprises, according to financial statements. In 2004, the Service Center reported spending $1.1 million on management costs and $9.87 million on programs, primarily the housing projects and radio stations. After payroll, the largest expenses are rent, travel and interest on loans.

Chavez also heads the Cesar E. Chavez Development Fund, which sits on almost $10 million and uses the interest to help support the Service Center and other related charities — even as the UFW issues desperate pleas for the donations that make up one-third of the union's $7-million budget.

The business of organizing farmworkers has become almost an afterthought, like the junked cars and abandoned school bus that once transported boycott volunteers and now litter a back field on the UFW's 180-acre campus.

"At times people might wonder and question the resources that go into other things," said Mark Splain, an AFL-CIO official who was on loan to the UFW in 2004 to set up a training program for the union's organizers. "I'd be slow to jump to the broad-based critique that these things don't matter or don't fit. This is a movement."

The movement's founder has been dead for more than a decade, but Cesar Chavez is key to how the organizations raise and spend money today.

Invoking his name and legacy has helped attract public money (more than $10 million in state grants in recent years), private support (more than $3 million from one philanthropic organization, the California Endowment, in the last few years) and individual donations ($2 million a year to the union alone). Last fall, the Kellogg Co. donated $25,000 to the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation and featured his likeness on a cornflakes box for Hispanic heritage month.

"A lot of times we're invited to places just because of the UFW," Paul Chavez said, readily acknowledging he takes advantage of the name to help the Service Center. "It opens the door. But then you have to be able to sell yourself on the basis of the work you do. . . . People like the association with my dad."

Public records paint only broad outlines of how the UFW and its related charities take in and spend their money. The leaders are able to avoid scrutiny by not indicating the affiliations and transactions between related groups on federal tax returns and inaccurately reporting that they receive no government funding.

A rough picture drawn from tax returns shows that about half the organizations' spending goes to pay employees — more than $12 million in 2004, the last year for which records are available.

About half of that is spent on employees who develop and staff the housing projects and the nine radio stations, including the latest and most successful, a hip-hop station in Bakersfield. Started by Cesar Chavez to communicate with farmworkers, the network known as Radio Campesina has evolved into a commercial success by adopting a format of mostly popular music and catering to a younger audience and advertisers eager to reach the growing Latino market.

"We want to be able to reach the younger generation, because, man, people are growing up not knowing Cesar Chavez, not knowing the Farm Worker Movement," Rodriguez said.

The Cesar E. Chavez Foundation aims to correct that as well, focusing on educational initiatives and the construction of a memorial, visitor center and retreat facility at the UFW headquarters. The foundation reported $3.7 million in assets on its most recent tax filing; the organization spent $1.1 million, the majority on staff. Of the total, the organization reported $842,760 went to program expenses, from fulfilling speaking engagements to teaching youths the principles of Cesar Chavez.

The other principal charities, headed by Rodriguez, have annual budgets of less than $2 million each and also spend about half on salary, with the remainder going to administrative expenses and consultants.

Though top officials in the various groups earn more than $100,000, the compensation is modest compared with that of comparable organizations. The movement's payrolls include about a dozen Chavez relatives.

Recently, Paul Chavez has hired more outside professionals, including a chief financial officer from a Silicon Valley company. But the family still plays a central role.

"I think that what people have got to remember is that this is all we've ever done, right?" Chavez said. "It's been a big part of who we are. The fact that we're sticking with it to me isn't anything unusual."

The following three cases, all involving state funds, illustrate in detail how the leaders of the Farm Worker Movement leverage support from one another, exploit Cesar Chavez's name and legacy, and spend money enriching their own enterprise.

LUPE: Political Clout Helps the Entire Movement

In the spring of 2003, California officials basically wrote the Farm Worker Movement a blank check.

State officials waived competitive bidding requirements to give La Union del Pueblo Entero a $2.2-million contract to educate farmworker parents, saying the group's extensive community network in eight counties made it the only organization equipped to do the job.

In fact, LUPE did not even have an office in any of the counties.

Then the Texas-based group demanded the first year's state money upfront to start the California program, which provides information and referrals to farmworker parents with preschool children.

The California First Five Commission agreed to advance money each quarter and have LUPE account for it later — the first time the commission had made such an arrangement since it began operating in 1999, according to the then-director.

After the first nine months, the charity stopped submitting vouchers to back up its expenses and did not bother explaining how it spent the state money for almost a year (until The Times requested the documents).

What the community organizing group lacked in on-the-ground operations it made up for with political cachet, which helped the proposal sail through the commission chaired by actor and director Rob Reiner.

Reiner said he believed LUPE was uniquely qualified to reach migrant farmworkers, a difficult group to educate about available services.

"This is something they were set up to do. They were the only ones," he said in an interview.

In 2003, Nora Benavides, then development director for the Service Center, heard the commission had money available to help migrant children. She approached commissioners, telling them the Farm Worker Movement could help.

"The commission said, 'We think the Farm Worker Movement can play a vital role to impact farmworkers. The eagle represents Cesar Chavez, and we know that the eagle represents an incredible amount of dignity to farmworkers,' " she recalled.

Jane Henderson, then executive director of the First Five Commission, said Benavides worked with Esperanza Ross, the registered lobbyist for the UFW, who helped persuade commission members to award LUPE the four-year contract.

Henderson knew Ross as the union's lobbyist. When LUPE moved into California, however, Ross took on a second role: She has been working as LUPE's policy director, augmenting the $30,250 the union paid her to lobby in 2004. Experts said she must be careful to balance the two roles, since lobbyists are permitted to engage in political activity that charities are barred from.

In 2004, LUPE spent almost 40% of the state grant on various arms of the Farm Worker Movement, according to state records. Among the beneficiaries:

The UFW was paid $17,166 to handle accounting and human resources, $463 for posters and pins with the UFW logo and $300 for a booth at the union convention.

The Service Center was paid $47,250 for consulting, to help LUPE comply with state regulations.

The Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development was paid $50,000 to write 10 30-second educational radio blurbs and develop a program to train parent leaders.

The UFW-affiliated radio studios were paid $9,300 for production, and then each of the four California radio stations the movement owns earned $375 per hour to air one-hour programs required by the grant.

The Farm Worker Movement's radio stations were even paid to air public service announcements, with rates ranging from $11 to $75 per 30-second spot.

[*See Charities, Page A17*]

A family of nonprofits

Who's who

About a dozen relatives of United Farm Workers union founder Cesar Chavez work for the various entities that make up the Farm Worker Movement. Those with multiple roles draw a single salary from one group, as noted where available. Here's a look:

Associated Press

Cesar Chavez

- **Anthony** *(Son)* — Runs Radio Campesina ($87,908) and serves on National Farm Workers Service Center, Stonybrook Corp. and Cesar E. Chavez Foundation boards
  - *(Married)* **Anna** — Service Center Finance Department
    - **Cesar L. Chavez** *(Grandchild)* — Engineer of a Radio Campesina station
    - **Robert Chavez** *(Grandchild)* — Asst. radio engineer
- **Paul** *(Son)* — Service Center president ($124,046); Stonybrook president; chairs the Cesar E. Chavez Community Development Fund and the Chavez Foundation; Civic Empowerment Coalition board secretary, and La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) board member
- **Eloise Chavez Carrillo** *(Daughter)* — Chavez Foundation board member (unpaid position)
  - **Bernadette Farinas** *(Grandchild)* — National Chavez Center site administrator
- **Elizabeth** *(Daughter)* — UFW controller ($62,237); LUPE and Chavez Foundation treasurer
  - *(Married)* **David Villarino** — Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development executive director ($77,996), and Service Center board member
- **Sylvia** *(Daughter)* — Chavez Foundation board member (unpaid position)
  - *(Married)* George Delgado
    - **Christine Delgado** *(Grandchild)* — UFW political director ($44,339), resigned to run for California Assembly
    - **Teresa Delgado** *(Grandchild)* — Until recently, ran Chavez Foundation programs at UFW headquarters
  - **Rodolfo Delgado** *(George's brother)* — Runs Stonybrook
- **Arturo Rodriguez** *(Widowed son-in-law)* — UFW president ($77,890); president of the Farmworker Institute, the Civic Coalition, UFW Foundation and LUPE; board member of Chavez Foundation, union pension and health funds
  - **Julie Rodriguez** *(Grandchild)* — Chavez Foundation programs director
  - **Andres Irlando** *(Daughter's son-in-law)* — Until recently, the Chavez Foundation president ($114,151)
  - **Sonia Hernandez** *(Rodriguez's fiancee)* — Service Center's Education Initiatives director

The Farm Worker Movement

Here are the main tax-exempt entities that grew out of the United Farm Workers' drive to organize farm laborers.*

	Budget		
Arturo Rodriguez presides over:	**Net assets**	**Revenue**	**Expenses**
United Farm Workers — Labor union representing primarily farmworkers.	$1,523,066	$6,638,329	$7,216,385
UFW Foundation — Formerly the National Farm Workers Health Group, which funded health clinics; now a charity searching for a mission; may focus on immigration initiatives.	$350,862	$2,920	$19,782
Civic Empowerment Coalition — Formed last year to collect money from farmworkers and UFW members and spend it on political causes.	$4,353	$10	$25,059
Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development — Obtains state, federal and local grants to do research and train farm laborers and other Latino workers; runs English classes for Spanish speakers.	$73,303	$1,428,940	$1,442,744
La Union del Pueblo Entero — Community organizing group, primarily in Texas, lobbies for street lights and other services in poor areas. Expanded into California in 2004 with California Endowment and state funding.	$16,797	$1,837,890	$1,626,458
Paul Chavez presides over:			
National Farm Workers Service Center — Builds and manages affordable housing projects; operates the nine-station Radio Campesina; launching educational initiative for Latino youths. It also forms other nonprofits for individual housing projects.	$24,593,728	$16,273,635	$10,995,747
Stonybrook Corp. — Owns and manages property, including UFW headquarters; provides maintenance and food service. Recently acquired the Keene Store, a diner just outside UFW headquarters.	$2,131,146	$763,379	$1,053,263
Cesar E. Chavez Foundation — Established after Chavez died in 1993 to promote his legacy; has focused on educational initiatives and on establishing a visitor center, memorial garden and retreat facility at UFW headquarters.	$3,672,514	$2,542,519	$1,088,516
Cesar E. Chavez Community Development Fund — Formerly the Martin Luther King Farm Worker Fund, a farmworkers services foundation set up with employer donations. Now provides loans for Service Center housing projects and supports the Service Center, the Chavez Foundation and other related charities.	$9,817,031	$1,212,910	$638,059
Other organizations			
Juan de la Cruz Pension Plan — Pension plan administered by union-management board. It has difficulty finding eligible retirees. It pays pensions to 2,411 retirees and receives payments for about 3,500 participants, mostly unionized farmworkers and several hundred Farm Worker Movement employees.	$102.7 million		Yearly administrative costs: $1.5 million, about one-third as much as the $4.6 million it gives out
Robert F. Kennedy Medical Plan — Designed for farmworkers with seasonal employment; now covers fewer than 3,000 workers during peak season, including several hundred employees of the UFW and its affiliates. The plan is administered by a staff working at UFW headquarters; the board includes union and management trustees.	$7,953,676		$10.5 million in benefits

*The financial data are the most recent available, generally for the 2004 calendar year. Assets are as of Dec. 31, 2004, except for the Chavez Foundation and the Farmworker Institute, which are for July 1, 2004.

Sources: IRS 990 forms, U.S. Department of Labor's Form LM2 Labor Organization Annual Report and Form 5500 Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan, and Times reporting
Graphics reporting by Miriam Pawel

Lorena Iñiguez *Los Angeles Times*

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Photographs by DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

SALUTE TO A LEADER: *Paul Chavez, third from left, joins others as they extend their hands toward the grave of his father, Cesar Chavez, at the National Chavez Center memorial garden in Keene, Calif. The ceremony in September, with current and former UFW organizers, marked the 40th anniversary of the union's first grape strike, which began in the Central Valley city of Delano.*

[*Charities, from Page A16*]

During one week in December 2004, Radio Campesina billed $2,295 to do 85 promotions for an upcoming event, charging $27 for each 30-second promotion. Then it charged $5,000 for 90 minutes of live broadcasts from the event.

Paul Chavez, who oversees the radio stations and also sits on the board of LUPE, said the network doesn't usually charge for public service announcements unless groups come in with a budget: "It's really whatever the market can bear."

The checks are cut by the UFW's accounting office, run by Elizabeth Villarino, who is also the treasurer of LUPE.

To meet the goal of the program funded by the First Five Commission, LUPE set up committees of farmworker parents, educated them about their preschool children's needs and helped them sign up for existing programs, such as health insurance.

Once organizers had set up the committees and compiled a database of parents, half a dozen organizers said, Benavides told them to start signing the parents up as LUPE members and charging a $40 annual fee. When staffers objected, they said, they were forced out.

Benavides, who became LUPE's executive director in August 2004, agreed that the organizers were reluctant to ask for membership dues, which she said are vital to making programs self-sustaining and making sure members feel invested in LUPE.

"Some people just aren't comfortable asking for money," she said, adding that she fired a number of staff members because they did not meet various goals, including that one.

When state officials monitoring the grant raised questions about the staff turnover and the push for members, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, also the president of LUPE, tried to reach Reiner to complain.

Some LUPE staff members said they objected that it was wrong to collect dues for programs that were already paid for by the state grant. In some cases, they said they'd assured parents there would be no fee.

"We didn't need the money," said Cesar Lara, LUPE's California director until he resigned under pressure in July. "And we weren't offering any services."

RENOVATION: *The UFW is transforming its La Paz headquarters in Keene into a tourist attraction at a cost of $5 million in taxpayer funds. Stone for this fountain in the memorial garden was quarried near Guadalajara, Mexico.*

MARKETING THE MAN: *The Cesar Chavez Foundation sells a cereal box with its namesake's image, signed by his widow, for $15. The box, produced by Kellogg Co. to mark Hispanic Heritage Month, also features singer Celia Cruz.*

Vista del Monte Project: a Loan Among Friends

Tenants in the apartment complex perched high in the San Francisco hills had stunning views of the bay, but in 2000 they were about to be evicted. Then the National Farm Workers Service Center bought the 104-unit building on Gold Mine Drive with a low-interest loan from the California Housing Finance Agency and a promise to keep the rents affordable.

To swing the deal, Paul Chavez, president of the Service Center, needed to borrow an additional $1.2 million to help renovate the complex. So he turned to the Cesar E. Chavez Community Development Fund, a foundation he also chairs.

Chavez said he presented the deal to the foundation board and recused himself from the vote on the loan. The result was a $1.2 million note at 11.75% interest, far higher than any of the Service Center's many other notes or loans for affordable housing projects.

"That's the amount that was needed to entice the fund to come in," Chavez said, noting the Chavez Fund had to liquidate other investments in order to make the loan.

Chavez acknowledged divided loyalties. As head of the Service Center, he said, "I've got to make sure that the deal pencils out." On the other hand, he said, "In my mind it's got to be at a higher rate than you might be able to get on the street, just to make sure that there aren't any appearances of impropriety or anything like that."

Along with purchasing the Vista del Monte complex, the Service Center embarked on extensive repairs. The rehabilitation ran into trouble right away. Apartments flooded when the roof was being repaired, mold grew, tenants were displaced and the contractor repeatedly asked for changes that increased the price.

Jon Orovecz, the consultant hired by the California Housing Finance Agency to oversee construction, complained frequently that prices exceeded industry standards and that the Service Center officials were agreeing to unnecessary costs.

"Never in my 25-year career have I seen anything as ridiculous," he wrote in May 2002. " . . . A lot of money has been wasted due to a failure to understand what things really cost and to intelligently explore other alternatives."

When the state agency, with $11.4 million invested at 5.9% interest, found out the Service Center was making payments on the Chavez fund loan, officials ordered it to stop immediately because the project was over budget.

State officials warned repeatedly that the payments to the Chavez fund were unauthorized, but to no avail.

According to notes of one meeting, the Service Center's general counsel, Emilio Huerta, insisted the payments were essential.

"Per EH, they need to continue payments. The major reason provided was that they do not want to upset good relationship with C. Chavez Development for future financing needs," the state loan officer wrote.

The close relationship between the two entities goes beyond the common leadership of Paul Chavez. The Chavez fund, with about $10 million in assets, is a foundation that must give a certain percentage of its earnings each year to designated charities. The main charity the fund supports each year, according to tax returns, is the Service Center.

Chavez Center: From Union Hub to Tourist Attraction

Hundreds of UFW workers used to live and work on the sprawling grounds of the former tuberculosis sanatorium in the Tehachapi Mountains, the union headquarters since 1971. Single staff members lived in the main building of the hospital, couples with children in the double-wide trailers. The massive, Mission-style North Unit housed offices and rooms for large events, from conferences to weddings.

Today all the offices fit in one small building, and the compound is being transformed into a tourist attraction that lionizes Chavez and his accomplishments — and makes money for the movement he founded.

The tab: $5 million dollars in taxpayer money.

The methodology: All in the family.

When the state required matching funds to obtain a grant to transform the decrepit North Unit into the Chavez Learning Institute, the landlord offered to forgo the rent.

The Chavez Foundation, headed by Paul Chavez, gratefully accepted the offer from the Stonybrook Corp., headed by Paul Chavez.

To verify the multimillion-dollar value of the donation, the Chavez Foundation sent state officials a letter from a local real estate expert: Emilio Huerta, president of American Pacific Brokerage, confirmed the value of the building owned by the Stonybrook Corp., the charity Emilio Huerta serves as counsel and board secretary.

When state officials wanted an outside appraisal, the Chavez Foundation turned to Celestino Aguilar, a Fresno real estate maven Paul Chavez recently referred to as "Mr. Slick" in describing his role decades ago in helping Cesar Chavez get into the housing business.

State officials were satisfied that the offer to forgo rent met the requirement for raising matching dollars on the $2.5-million grant, said Diane Matsuda, executive officer of the California Cultural and Historical Endowment: "There's the appearance maybe of some sort of self-dealing, but in this particular case we believe it was a genuine offer of the lease."

The Chavez Foundation's grant application stressed the historic value of the project, the Chavez library that will be created and the opportunity to tell the story of the Farm Worker Movement. In public appearances, family members stress that the retreat center will be available for rent, with rooms to stay overnight and catering done by Pan Y Vino, the cafeteria on campus that was once a communal kitchen. The Stonybrook Corp. has sole catering rights.

Two earlier state grants, an additional $2.57 million, were spent creating a memorial garden around Chavez's grave and a visitor center with photo exhibits and a light-and-sound enhanced re-creation of his office. That area is already available for rent:

"When planning for a special event, you want to give your guests an out-of-the-ordinary experience that is truly unforgettable. And if you are like most people, you look for a venue that will excite, inspire, entertain, and delight everyone on your list," reads an advertisement by the Chavez Foundation. "The National Chavez Center — the historic headquarters and final resting place of the late civil rights and farm labor leader Cesar Chavez — is the perfect setting for a wedding, or an outdoor festival."

The project ran 50% over budget, yet two state audits found no problem, even though there was no written documentation explaining the overruns. In his last days in office, Gov. Gray Davis gave the foundation an additional $600,000 to help plug the gap.

Sixty-four percent of the money spent on construction went to nonunion firms, Paul Chavez said, adding that it was difficult to find unionized companies willing to bid on the project.

On Cesar Chavez's birthday last March, volunteers gathered to fill dumpsters with garbage they carted out of the abandoned North Unit, soon to become a shrine to the movement's history. Grape boycott posters, index cards listing unfair labor practice cases, associate UFW membership applications and old Christmas cards fluttered away in a stiff wind, unwanted history jettisoned along with the furniture and debris.

About This Series

SUNDAY: The UFW betrays its legacy as farmworkers struggle.

TODAY: The family business: Insiders benefit amid a complex web of charities.

TUESDAY: The roots of today's problems go back three decades.

WEDNESDAY: A UFW success story — but not in the fields.

On the Web

For previous stories and additional photos, visit *latimes.com/ufw*.

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Real Estate Deals Pay Off for Insiders

In one case, a charity sold property earmarked for low-income housing to a group with which it had ties. The land was then flipped for a $1.1-million gain.

By Miriam Pawel
Times Staff Writer

Photographs by Don Bartletti *Los Angeles Times*

A CHARITABLE PRICE: *In 2004, the UFW sold this West L.A. house to a daughter of union co-founder Dolores Huerta for $200,000, about half the market price.*

The financing was set and the plans were drawn, dotted yellow lines showing just where the morning and afternoon sun would shine on the 53 homes for lower-income families.

Almost a decade after the National Farm Workers Service Center had bought vacant land at a Fresno crossroads, the charity was ready to break ground on the affordable housing project called La Estancia.

Then the plans were abruptly scrapped.

Paul Chavez, president of the Service Center, decided the plot had appreciated so much it made more sense to sell. He did not have to look far for a willing buyer: Emilio Huerta, the Service Center's lawyer, worked in the office next door.

In May 2004, Huerta formed a private corporation called Landmark Residential. Three months later, Landmark bought the Fresno parcel from the Service Center for $1.8 million.

The day they closed the sale, Huerta and his partners had already agreed to sell the land for $2.9 million to a local developer, according to county records — reaping a profit of $1.1 million.

The insider deal is one example of how leaders of the UFW and the groups they call the Farm Worker Movement have steered money to friends and relatives at the expense of the charities they serve.

Some other recent transactions illustrate their penchant for doing business with their friends:

■ A UFW-related charity rented space last fall in a building owned by UFW Secretary/Treasurer Tanis Ybarra, who also sits on the charity's board. Ybarra said he leases the building, in Parlier near Fresno, to his son Arturo.

The charity's executive director, Nora Benavides, said she sent her staff to talk with Arturo Ybarra because he was well-connected in the area, and he offered to make space alongside his mother Martha's tax preparation business. Benavides said it is convenient for the community organizing group's clients: "We say, hey, listen, there's Martha here who's preparing taxes if you need it. . . . We don't push it, we just let people know it is available."

Benavides said she formalized the rental arrangement to avoid any conflicts of interest. The move was never discussed by the charity's board, which Tanis Ybarra said doesn't "micromanage" such decisions.

■ The Service Center sold the UFW a Craftsman-style house in West Los Angeles that once housed dozens of boycott volunteers during the height of the union's organizing activity. The UFW allowed friends to live there rent free, then sold it in 2004 to a daughter of UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta for $200,000 — about half the market price for comparable houses at the time, according to county records.

Huerta said that when she heard the UFW was going to sell the house, she asked to buy it because of its historic significance to the movement and her family. Because she had not taken a salary or received a pension during her years working for the UFW, the union gave her a break on the price, she and UFW President Arturo Rodriguez said.

Charities, exempt from paying taxes because they serve a public good, have a legal responsibility to obtain the best possible deal. They are required to disclose transactions with related groups or individuals and to be able to defend such decisions as cost-effective.

In the case of La Estancia, Paul Chavez said Landmark matched a competitor's bid and was ready to pay the full $1.8 million in cash. He said he was unaware that Landmark flipped the property at a significant profit.

"What you have is a deal in which the charity obviously was paid a million dollars less than what the property was worth," said Marcus Owens, an attorney who formerly headed the Internal Revenue Service division that oversees tax-exempt groups. "That's a lot of money."

The Players

Emilio Huerta and Paul Chavez have been friends since childhood, when they roamed the grounds around the building where they now work — the compound in the Tehachapi Mountains where Paul's father, Cesar, and Emilio's mother, Dolores, built the United Farm Workers union.

Emilio, the fourth of 11 children, grew up in a series of surrogate homes as his mother negotiated contracts, organized strikes and lobbied in Sacramento and Washington. He dropped out of high school and went to work full time for the UFW.

At 17, Emilio worked as a graphic artist in the UFW print shop, alongside Paul, who worked as a printer. A few years later, Cesar Chavez tapped the two to attend a negotiation school set up to groom the next generation of union leaders. At the time, Huerta said he had no idea why he was chosen; later, he tied it to an ongoing battle over the departure of the UFW's legal staff. "Part of it was Cesar making a point: He could teach anyone to be a negotiator," Huerta said.

SELLER: *Paul Chavez, Cesar's son, runs the Service Center, which sold a Fresno property zoned for housing.*

BUYER: *Emilio Huerta — Dolores' son and the center's lawyer — resold the land with partners at a big profit.*

In 1990, Paul Chavez took over the Service Center and began an ambitious affordable housing program; after attending college and law school, Emilio Huerta joined him. Huerta became the secretary of the corporation in 1993, serving in that position for the next decade. The next year he became the general counsel, a job he performed first as an employee and later as an independent contractor.

For several years beginning in 2000, Huerta's firm was paid more than $120,000 as a consultant to the Service Center. As an independent lawyer, Huerta bills for work on individual housing projects built by Service Center subsidiaries; a 2001 contract gave his hourly rate as $200.

In the 1990s, Chavez and Huerta hooked up with another high school friend who grew up in the UFW movement. Billy Encinas had started a small development company in San Diego and specialized in affordable housing projects.

Chavez had access to financing, thanks to the UFW's political clout and the Service Center's track record; Encinas had connections to projects, particularly in Texas, a state that Service Center leaders were desperate to move into as they fashioned themselves into a broader Latino advocacy group.

Encinas and the Service Center teamed up and went on to develop housing projects in California and Texas with subsidies from the state and federal governments.

The Land

In the early 1980s, as Cesar Chavez was struggling to find ways to finance services for farmworkers, a Fresno businessman had approached him with a proposition: Develop housing jointly and split the profits.

"He said, 'I know how to make money; I'd like to help out,' " Paul Chavez recalled about Celestino Aguilar, now a Fresno appraiser. "He's the one who really talked about housing as an investment."

The partnership, which built and sold some upscale houses and then apartment complexes and commercial strip malls, was the UFW's first foray into development.

Later the union built housing for farmworkers; in more recent years under Paul Chavez's leadership the Service Center has built and bought affordable housing aimed at lower-income Latinos — though not, for the most part, farmworkers.

The first partnership Cesar Chavez formed with Aguilar was called American Liberty Investments, and in 1993 the corporation bought a 12-acre plot in a sparsely developed area on the west side of Fresno for $316,000. A few years later, the Service Center took ownership.

Community opposition scuttled various development plans, including a sale to the high school that had been built across the street. Residents also opposed the Service Center's plan to rezone the site and build multiple units, but the Service Center persisted and eventually won approval.

After drawing up plans for a town house complex, the Service Center tried to get a state grant earmarked for farmworker housing. But state officials rejected the application, saying the proposed home prices would require that families earn at least $29,245 a year, an unrealistic income for farmworkers. State housing officials also said the proposed price, $115,166 for a three-bedroom home, was too high for the area and the homes could be priced more reasonably if the Service Center did not insist on collecting an "excessive" development fee of $10,000 per home.

Eventually, the Service Center arranged other financing and announced in a newsletter that construction would begin by the end of 2003. By then, the real estate market had exploded. The demand for single-family homes was high, particularly in that area of Fresno. A parcel that had been through the time-consuming process of rezoning was worth significantly more.

A contractor the Service Center was working with offered to buy the site and build the subdivision himself.

The Deal

Emilio Huerta was very familiar with "the dirt," as he called the Fresno parcel. He had tried to negotiate the sale to the school district years before. Though his current role didn't involve him directly in the Service Center's housing department, Huerta often drew on his experience to offer Chavez advice on property and land values.

After a decade with the Service Center — much longer than he had intended to stay — Huerta wanted to move on. In the fall of 2003, he began working privately with Encinas on a plan to build single-family housing.

During 2004, Huerta juggled the new venture with his responsibilities for the Service Center, which he still served as counsel. He had been traveling around the country with Encinas, making plans, when they heard Chavez wanted to sell the Fresno land. It seemed like an opportunity to launch the new business.

"Paul came and said, 'I'm willing to sell this land,' " Huerta said. Chavez said he had another buyer lined up, and Huerta asked for a chance to compete. "I said, 'If we're allowed, I'd like to make an offer.' "

Encinas and Huerta consulted with another partner, Daniel Rigney, a veteran homebuilder now working as a senior vice president at Sunamerica Affordable Housing Corp., and Landmark made a bid.

Chavez opted for the businessman who made the first offer and asked Huerta to draw up the contract.

Within days, that deal fell through. Chavez went back to Landmark.

Huerta said he pointed out several times that the value of the land would increase if the Service Center waited and finished the site plan, negotiating such details as sewers, curbs and utility hookups. "Paul said, 'We need some money.' " Huerta recalled. "I said, 'Paul, it will be much more valuable if it has a map.' "

Chavez needed the cash right away because he was interested in bidding on a new radio station that could expand Radio Campesina into the Sierra foothills. If the Service Center won the bid, it would need to produce a lot of cash in a hurry.

He pulled his friend aside and warned Huerta not to bid if he couldn't make good on the deal, Huerta said. "I didn't see it as some sort of opportunity to cash out," he said. "I saw it as an opportunity to go ahead and prove to Paul and the Service Center that we can put land deals together. This is my chance to prove to Paul and the Service Center that I can produce — that's how I saw it."

Chavez asked for $1.8 million and imposed a tight timetable and other restrictions. Landmark agreed to all Chavez's conditions.

"They had a high bid; we just stepped in and took it at that price," said Rigney. "I thought, there's still some opportunity there; we can build it out, make some money — a little retirement nest egg."

Rigney called a loan broker he had done business with before and asked him to see what kind of deal he could put together to finance the purchase. The broker called a week later: Another client, Ennis Homes, was looking for more land to develop; would Landmark be interested in selling?

"I said to my loan broker, 'If you can sell for x, sell,' " Rigney recalled. "I threw something way up high on the wall, and they came back and took it."

By the time Landmark bought the property, the partners had an agreement to resell the land to Ennis, Rigney said. County records show the Landmark-Ennis deed is dated Aug. 25, the day before the deed on Landmark's purchase from the Service Center.

Chavez said he saw no conflict in the sale. When first asked about it, he expressed surprise that Huerta was involved. "He had given me notice that he was leaving; we talked, and he had a change of mind," Chavez said in an interview. "He said, 'You know what, I've put too much into Service Center.' My understanding was that he severed the relationship" with Encinas.

Huerta said there was full disclosure and that the Service Center board, which approved the sale, was aware that he and Encinas were partners in Landmark.

In a written clarification to The Times, Chavez later said that Huerta had continued to do business with Encinas but that it was not a conflict because Huerta resigned as secretary of the Service Center in October 2003, though he continued to do legal work.

The distinction could be significant for the Internal Revenue Service, which levies sanctions on deals where officers or key officials of a charity profit unduly from a transaction with the organization.

"It really was a very, very clean deal: Buying from one and planning to do something, then somebody comes in and offers you a deal," Rigney said. He estimated his profit could have been double if Landmark had decided to develop the houses itself rather than sell. But the offer from Ennis had been too tempting to turn down: "I guess I shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth."

Huerta said he decided after the sale to part ways with Encinas because of philosophical differences, and he is in the process of dissolving Landmark. "We had a national plan. They were dreams," he said.

The Service Center tried to acquire the new radio station but was outbid. Last January, the Service Center board reappointed Huerta as secretary, Chavez said, adding that Huerta does much of his legal work for the organization pro bono.

Calling Chavez his best friend since childhood, Huerta said: "No amount of money is worth jeopardizing that. It wasn't because I saw big dollar signs. As an attorney, I could make more money than here. My reputation was on the line. I wanted to do housing. I still want to."

Los Angeles Times

On The Internet: WWW.LATIMES.COM

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A Killer Takes Wing

■ For the avian flu to reach North America — and there is no known way to stop it — all it will take is an infected bird's migration.

By KAREN KAPLAN
Times Staff Writer

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — Beneath a dim morning sky, Jonathan Runstadler trudged across the ice with a long fiberglass tube, some gardening tools and a smattering of plastic lab bottles.

Months earlier, summer breezes had carried wild birds from Asia to this little pond. Now, with the temperature hovering at 9 degrees, Runstadler bored through the frozen surface in search of the seeds of a pandemic.

"Ground Zero is what's in birds," said the University of Alaska molecular biologist, who dropped hockey puck-shaped ice samples into a Ziploc bag.

This snowy patch of the Alaskan wilderness sits at the edge of a bird flu outbreak that emerged in Hong Kong in 1997 and has recently spread as far as Kazakhstan, Croatia and Siberia. The virus has ravaged farms in Thailand and felled wild birds from western China to Eastern Europe.

Turkey has become the latest hot spot, reporting at least two human deaths from bird flu since the start of the year — the first human cases outside Asia.

Since 2003, the virus has killed 76 people in its march across the globe, according to the World Health Organization. More than half died in the last year.

What Americans once viewed as a distant scourge is now just across the Bering Strait. If it arrives in North America, scientists expect to find it first in Alaska, a breeding ground for many migratory birds from Asia.

The bird flu virus, known as H5N1, is the culmination of random mutations and countless viral mixings, producing a strain of influenza completely unfamiliar to the human immune system.

It could be just a few more mutations away from being able to easily infect and spread among people — the raw ingredients needed to spark a global pandemic. Or it could evolve into a harmless strain.

Its future is uncertain.

[*See Bird flu, Page A12*]

JIM YOUNG *Reuters*

CENTER OF ATTENTION: *Samuel A. Alito Jr. prepares to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Sen. Arlen Specter, standing right. "No person in this country, no matter how high or powerful, is above the law," Alito said in his opening statement.*

Alito Tries to Defuse Doubts

Bush's nominee says he's not bound by ideology, but Democrats promise sharp questions for the man who could tip the high court's balance.

By MAURA REYNOLDS AND DAVID G. SAVAGE
Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — Judge Samuel A. Alito Jr., President Bush's choice for a closely divided Supreme Court, began his Senate confirmation hearings Monday by attempting to assure skeptical Democrats that he is not an ideological conservative with an expansive view of the powers of the presidency.

But Democrats pointedly put him on notice that he would be questioned aggressively about his views, particularly on the right to abortion and the president's claim to sweeping authority as commander in chief.

"There is nothing that is more important for our republic than the rule of law," Alito said in his opening statement. "No person in this country, no matter how high or powerful, is above the law, and no person in this country is beneath the law."

The scholarly appellate court judge appeared before the same Senate Judiciary Committee that four months ago recommended confirmation of John G. Roberts Jr. as chief justice, but it quickly became apparent that Alito's hearings would be far more contentious.

The sense of partisan confrontation has been heightened by the controversy over Bush's assertion of broad executive authority in the war on terrorism — an interpretation of presidential power that Alito supported as a government lawyer.

"The challenge for Judge Alito in the course of these hearings is to demonstrate that he's going to protect the rights and liberties of all Americans and, in doing that, serve as an effective check on government overreaching," Sen. Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont said in the first of a series of stern statements directed toward the nominee by committee Democrats.

Alito's 15 years on the U.S. 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals have provided considerable fodder for his critics, and the fact that he would replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, frequently the high court's swing vote, has rallied liberal opposition.

"This is not just another nomination to the Supreme Court," said Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.). "This is the nomination that will tip the balance of the court one way or the other."

Lawmakers from both parties have said that Alito remains likely to be confirmed by the Republican-dominated Senate, al-

[*See Alito, Page A14*]

RELATED STORY

Excerpts: Selections from some opening statements. **A14**

Dow Pushes Past 11,000 Mark as Investors' Optimism Rises

Other indexes, which many analysts view as more accurate gauges, also hit four-year highs.

By WALTER HAMILTON AND KATHY M. KRISTOF
Times Staff Writers

NEW YORK — The Dow Jones industrial average closed above 11,000 for the first time in more than four years Monday, as stocks continued an impressive new-year surge that has fueled optimism about their prospects in 2006.

A late-day rally carried the 30-stock index above the psychologically important number. That helped Wall Street cement gains for the first five sessions of the year — a bullish sign historically.

The blue-chip index rose 52.59 points, or 0.5%, to 11,011.90 amid a broad-based market rally.

An 8% surge in shares of General Motors Corp. — the Dow's weakest performer last year — propelled the index, as did enthusiasm about the outlook for the global economy and expectations that the Federal Reserve was nearly done tightening credit.

[*See Dow, Page A16*]

RELATED COVERAGE

How stock and bond mutual funds performed in 2005. **C1**

Regaining ground

The Dow's Monday close is still 6% below the all-time high of 11,722.98 of Jan. 14, 2000.

Dow closes, quarterly and latest

Source: Bloomberg News

Los Angeles Times

Details on Cheney's Illness Are Few

Officials give a limited report after the vice president spends several hours in a hospital for breathing difficulty tied to drugs he was taking.

By PETER WALLSTEN AND THOMAS H. MAUGH II
Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — Vice President Dick Cheney spent 4½ hours in a hospital early Monday, but White House officials offered only limited details about what led him to seek treatment.

Officials said Cheney, who is 64 and has suffered four heart attacks, experienced shortness of breath as a reaction to anti-inflammatory drugs to treat a "preexisting foot condition." He was taken to George Washington University Hospital in downtown Washington at 3 a.m. EST.

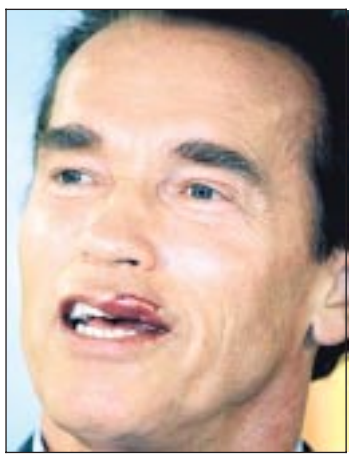
The officials said doctors noticed that Cheney was "retaining fluid" as a response to the medication. He was released about 7:30 a.m. after doctors prescribed diuretics to eliminate the fluid.

The vice president returned to work in the afternoon, and aides said he was feeling fine. But the incident sparked renewed questions about the health and fitness of the man who is first in line to succeed President Bush and, as the behind-the-scenes architect of Bush's foreign policy, has emerged as one of the most powerful vice presidents in history.

While White House officials have routinely offered details of Bush's medical checkups and

[*See Cheney, Page A16*]

INSIDE



STEPHEN OSMAN *Los Angeles Times*

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European Women Join Ranks of Jihadis

Authorities confront an unsettling new trend: militants' wives who are suspected of plotting suicide attacks, with their mates or alone.

By SEBASTIAN ROTELLA
Times Staff Writer

AMSTERDAM — The women of the Dutch extremist network were a new breed of holy warriors on the front lines where Islam and the West collide.

In the male-dominated world of Islamic extremism, they saw themselves as full-fledged partners in jihad. Wives watched videos about female suicide bombers, posed for photos holding guns and fired automatic weapons during clandestine target practice.

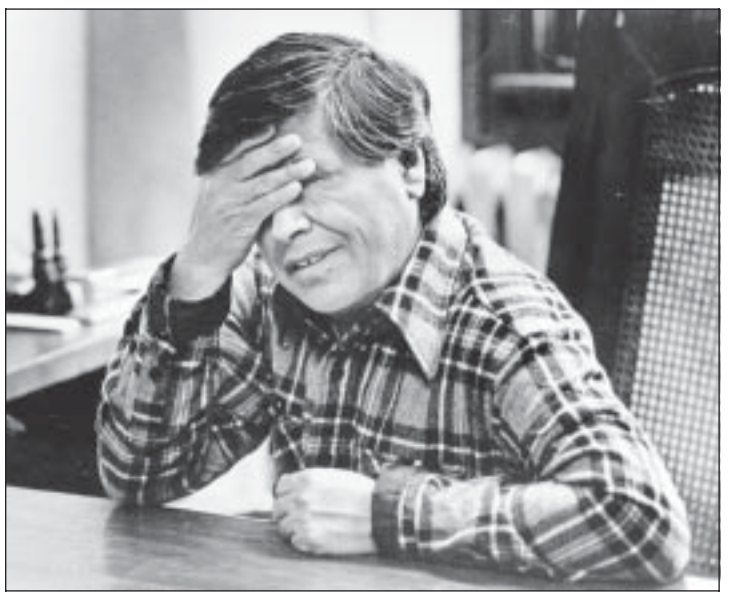
The militants swore publicly that one of them would kill Dutch legislator Ayaan Hirsi Ali, an outspoken feminist. Last summer, police captured a 23-year-old leader of the group and his wife at a subway station here as they were allegedly on their way to assassinate the legislator.

The story of the Dutch network, 14 members of which are now on trial, reveals the increasing aggressiveness and prominence of female extremists in Europe. In a chilling trend in the Netherlands and Belgium, police are investigating militants' wives suspected of plotting suicide attacks with their husbands, or on their own.

"I think it's a very dangerous trend," said Ali, the lawmaker targeted for assassination. "Women all over the world are seen as vulnerable, as less vio-

[*See Women, Page A8*]

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT



Los Angeles Times

FATIGUE: *The strain of a hectic job shows in the face of UFW leader Cesar Chavez at the end of a long day in March 1979.*

Decisions of Long Ago Shape the Union Today

In the late 1970s Cesar Chavez grew intent on keeping control. He crushed dissent, turned against friends, purged staff and sought a new course.

By MIRIAM PAWEL
Times Staff Writer

Third of four parts

In the winter of 1977, at the height of his union's power, Cesar Chavez summoned the leaders of the United Farm Workers to a mountain retreat in the Sierra foothills. They found themselves in an ultra-clean compound where recovering drug addicts with shaved heads wandered the grounds dressed in uniform overalls.

The purpose soon became clear: Charles Dederich, the flamboyant founder of Synanon, welcomed his guests to the rehabilitation facility and explained the rules of the Game, a therapy designed for drug addicts. A dozen players would gang up on each other, "indicting" a participant for bad behavior by hurling abusive and often profane invective.

The UFW board members had arrived expecting to hash out a new strategic plan after a string of victories, including a pact to keep the rival Teamsters union out of the fields. Instead, they found themselves in the Game room, where some observed from elevated seats as others accepted a challenge to play in the recessed pit.

In retrospect, some UFW leaders came to view the Synanon meeting as a watershed, the first clear signal that Chavez had veered off course and shifted his focus away from organizing farmworkers.

"We were so close," said Eliseo Medina, [*See History, Page A18*]

Website Finds Facts Behind Addiction Memoir Are Shaky

A bestselling book picked by Oprah has key events that can't be verified, a report says.

By SCOTT MARTELLE AND SCOTT COLLINS
Times Staff Writers

James Frey's rendition of his troubled past — drug abuse, blackouts, jail time and an addict's betrayal of friends and family — is not the kind of story you'd expect to tug at many readers' heartstrings.

Yet Frey's graphically drawn 2003 memoir of downfall and rehabilitation, "A Million Little Pieces," became last year's top-selling nonfiction book after Oprah Winfrey picked it for her viewers' book club.

Frey's memoir sold nearly 2 million copies, the movie rights were purchased by Warner Bros. and the book established the author as an inspirational figure for recovering addicts.

But there might be less to Frey than meets the eye, according to the Smoking Gun website, which reported Sunday that it had been unable to substantiate significant portions of Frey's book, including arrests and court actions for which public records should be available.

The website's investigation, which began in November, sparked an Internet fracas involving Frey, who first broke the news Saturday night by posting a Smoking Gun e-mail to him on his *bigjimindustries.com* website.

"This is the latest investiga-

[*See Frey, Page A13*]

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

[*History, from Page A18*]
not accept it. Chavez made no attempt to sway Medina.

"That removed the one credible alternative to Cesar," Ganz said. "It changed the dynamic."

1979: The Strike

Salvador Bustamante, known as Chava, had followed his older brother, Mario, who had followed their father from Mexico into the fields of Southern California and then into the union hall. In the winter and early spring, they picked lettuce in the Imperial Valley, the southeast corner of California along the Mexican border, then followed the harvest north to Salinas when the weather turned too hot in the desert.

Mario the firebrand and Chava the poet became union leaders, each elected to represent workers at his company.

"The union taught us not to be afraid," Mario Bustamante said. "Before we became part of the union, we were afraid of the law, the police, the growers."

The early successes were basic: an eight-hour day instead of harvest hours that began by the lights of trucks at 4:30 a.m. and ended when darkness fell at 9 p.m.

"That was one of the main advantages of having a union, to be able to put a limit on what the grower demanded," Chava Bustamante said.

Such victories helped them win converts. "We were really able to instill faith in people. Not just hope: faith," he said. "Our faith in the union."

When the UFW launched what would be its last major strike in early 1979, the Bustamante brothers were part of the core group that helped Ganz run the action.

At first the strike was successful. Then, on Feb. 10, a striker named Rufino Contreras went into the fields to chase out strikebreakers and was shot and killed. Amid mourning and recrimination, acrimony escalated among UFW leaders.

By March, Chavez called a special meeting because executive board members were barely speaking to one another. He had only one suggestion: "We have to play the Game, clean ourselves up."

Others, including his brother Richard, denounced the Game as destructive and doubted it would solve anything.

"I know it can," Chavez responded. "I don't know of any other thing; I don't."

Those who badmouthed the Game, especially Ganz, were undermining an unpleasant but useful tool, Chavez said: "Some people are afraid of being told things they're guilty of. Some are willing to take it for the goddamn cause and some are not."

The strike moved north into the Salinas Valley, following the harvest.

Ganz was stalling workers who wanted to expand the strike and stalling Chavez, who was pushing to end it. Workers devised slowdowns that varied from day to day: Plan Tortuga (turtle), go extra slow; Plan Canguro (kangaroo), skip over rows.

On the eve of the UFW's convention in Salinas on Aug. 11, more than 6,000 farmworkers and supporters marching from two directions converged at a rally where Chavez and Gov. Jerry Brown gave fiery speeches and talked about a general strike.

In fact, Chavez had come to Salinas intent on shifting the union's resources into a national boycott. At a secret meeting that night, he explained to the workers' leaders that the UFW could not afford a strike.

"The union is broke. We've spent $2.8 million on this strike," Chavez said. A boycott would increase pressure. "It takes more time, but it is easier to win. It is a sure win. In a general strike you aren't as sure you will win."

The farmworkers didn't buy it. One by one, for more than 90 minutes, they articulated reasons to strike. If they were sent to boycott, they would lose their jobs and seniority. Workers had been eager to strike for months. If there was money to support a boycott, why not for the strike that workers were demanding?

"If we don't do it, the high morale and all the desire they have had for so long to go on strike . . . that morale will fall to the ground," Chava Bustamante told Chavez. "We have to make a decision that we will have to live with forever."

Workers who had been on strike for seven months would feel abandoned, his brother Mario said: "And with that, the faith and spirit that everyone had in us will be lost."

Ganz ended the meeting after midnight, saying everyone was tired. The convention would endorse a boycott and a strike, concealing the dissension, and the group would reconvene. They never met with Chavez again.

"I think it was the worst thing you could do to a leader like him," said Sabino Lopez, another farmworker who attended the meeting. " . . . To say, 'Sorry, boss, we're not going to boycott.' "

Within days, more workers went out on strike, without benefits. Chavez called a meeting at La Paz to plan the boycott; Ganz was running the strike and refused to go. The two did not speak for weeks.

"I didn't feel I was part of the union leadership," Ganz said.

Unusually hot weather accelerated the harvest and increased the pressure on growers, who began to settle on terms union leaders had only dreamt about: wages starting at $5 per hour, significant medical benefits and paid union representatives.

Chavez hailed the victories but shunned the celebration at a Salinas hotel. "We had the growers lined up at the Towne House, waiting to sign, and Cesar wouldn't come," recalled Cohen, the lawyer who handled negotiations.

Back in La Paz, there was a different celebration around the same time. A class of farmworkers had completed a 10-week English course. More than a hundred friends, family and residents of La Paz gathered for graduation and applauded a student slide show that concluded: "The union is not Cesar Chavez. The union is the workers."

Minutes later, graduates and guests sat down to a celebratory lunch. Dolores Huerta rose and attacked the teacher, demanding to know who had put the students up to voicing such heresy.

The lunch was over before it began. Chavez fired two teachers later that day.

1980: The Paid Reps

The farmworker leaders had gathered at La Paz in May to discuss their new jobs when a jubilant young lawyer burst into the classroom to tell Cesar Chavez her good news: She had passed the bar.

Like many, Ellen Eggers had become hooked on the UFW after working as a boycott volunteer during college. By the time she graduated from law school, the legal department she knew had been dismantled. Sorry to miss working for Cohen, Eggers was nonetheless happy to move to La Paz and work for the usual $5 per week.

Chavez interrupted the meeting and introduced Eggers to the farmworkers who had recently been elected as paid representatives. They gave her a round of applause.

Mario Bustamante and Sabino Lopez were among the dozen elected by their peers to work as full-time union representatives, paid by the growers to work for the UFW — in effect, the only UFW staff who earned salaries.

"They were the future," Eliseo Medina said. "They were outstanding leaders."

The paid reps, as they were known, worked closely with Ganz, who had nurtured their leadership through the strike. They tackled grievances against the companies and the union bureaucracy. They struggled to explain to workers that they had responsibilities as well as rights. They harassed La Paz about medical claims paid so slowly that workers were getting dunned by collection agencies. And they helped organize other workers, believing that was essential to protect the financial stability of companies that paid union wages.

After wildcat strikes began in the garlic fields of Gilroy, the paid reps won an unlikely ally.

Tramutola had worked for the UFW for 11 years and considered himself a loyalist. He knew others viewed him that way, some with suspicion because of his role in carrying out purges. He was wary of the paid reps, with their penchant for independence and their Salinas power base, until he saw them organize elections that summer.

"Knowing it worked totally changed my perspective," he said. "They were the real deal. Their loyalty to Cesar was as great as anyone. It was working the way we had always hoped."

When Tramutola was summoned to La Paz at the end of the season, he drove confidently in the union's trademark Valiant, expecting to be quizzed about the election victories.

"In a second, I realized my time had come," Tramutola said. "Cesar had a way of pursing his lips when he was angry. He looked at me and said, 'Who are you working for?' He said, 'Are you taking your orders from Moscow? Only I will call elections.' I said, 'With all due respect, workers have the right to call for elections.' "

Tramutola resigned. He told others he did not want to be caught between Chavez and Ganz.

As questions about loyalty increased, so did forced resignations.

Gilbert Padilla had worked with Chavez and Huerta even before they formed the first farmworkers association back in 1962. A diplomat dubbed the Silver Fox, he had a gift for mimicry and making people laugh that served him well in negotiating compromises between workers and employers.

For some time, Padilla had found the changes in his longtime friend and mentor so puzzling that he asked others if they thought Chavez had gone crazy. Padilla was particularly outraged when Chavez scrapped plans for a clinic and service center in the Central Valley city of Parlier and turned the site over to a builder to make money jointly by selling houses.

"I knew Cesar was the man, *el jefe*, but I didn't think the movement belonged to him," said Padilla, who resigned as secretary/treasurer. "I thought it belonged to the workers."

1981: The Confrontation

The farmworker leaders in Salinas who had faced off politely against Chavez two years earlier when he tried to curtail the strike no longer trusted the leadership in La Paz. The feeling was mutual.

As the UFW convention approached, the challenge became more direct: The Salinas leaders decided to run candidates for the board. "There were no farmworkers on the board," Mario Bustamante said. "There was a need for someone to be on the board who understood the problems in the field."

They turned to Rosario Pelayo, a proud and fiercely determined farmworker with a warm smile and shy manner. Born in Mexico, she had worked in the fields since she was 8 and had followed her husband to California. She gave birth to 13 children, eight of whom survived, and began to volunteer with the UFW after the last was born in 1970. By 1973 she was getting arrested, by 1975 she was hosting Chavez at her home in the Imperial Valley, by 1977 she was president of the workers at her ranch.

"You always thought about the future of your children," she said, recalling days that began at 2 a.m. with leafleting buses that workers took to the fields and ended with late-night organizing sessions. "You didn't want what happened to you to happen to them."

The campaign for the UFW board was as fierce and ugly as the elections between the union and the growers. Chavez dispatched board members, who spent almost $5,000 campaigning against the insurgents, painting them as dangerous radicals trying to depose Chavez at the behest of Ganz and Cohen. Both had left the union months before.

Huerta had often found fault with Ganz but had been unable earlier to shake Chavez's confidence in his trusted aide. Then and now, she accused him of masterminding the Salinas insurgents' campaign, a charge Ganz and the workers reject as patronizing and untrue.

"They were good organizers," Huerta said about the paid reps, arguing they were manipulated by Ganz, who thought he should run the union.

On Sept. 5, Chavez opened the Fresno convention with a speech about "malignant forces" and then pulled off a parliamentary maneuver that effectively precluded a contested election for the board seats.

About 50 of the Salinas delegates walked out in protest. Chavez allies passed out leaflets calling the insurgents communists. Mario Bustamante broke the staff of his union flag in two.

The next day, Doug Adair, a grape picker and delegate from Coachella, rose to speak when Chavez asked for nominations.

Adair was working in the fields when he joined the UFW the day before the 1965 Delano grape strike began. He was a striker, a picketer, an aide in the legal office and an editor of the newspaper before returning to work at a Coachella vineyard. Pelayo had worked there, as had her sister. Adair liked her, and he thought the board needed someone who understood the workers' problems and was willing to challenge Chavez.

"At that point, there was nobody on the board to disagree with him," Adair said. "There was no connection between La Paz and the members in the field."

Adair nominated Pelayo, but was ruled out of order because she had walked out the day before.

After the convention came the repercussions.

Adair's wife was fired from her job as a nurse at the union-run health clinic. She was told, she said, that she was fired for "being married to the traitor."

In Hollister, Cesar's son Paul led picketing of the office of a legal assistance agency where Chava Bustamante worked.

"They'd come out to the fields and attack me and my friends," Pelayo said. She returned to the Imperial Valley, never worked in the fields again and tried to shut out news of the union. "I didn't want to know anything. It was great pain."

In Salinas, Huerta led a campaign to unseat Mario Bustamante, who had served as president of the union workers at his company for seven years, and the other dissident leaders. When the workers stood by their elected representatives, Chavez fired them.

"They accused me of being a spy, being with the growers," said Sabino Lopez. "I refused jobs with growers. I didn't want to allow them to make the point. At the end, nobody wanted me. The union didn't want me, the growers didn't want me."

Bustamante, Lopez and seven others sued, charging Chavez had fired them illegally because they were elected by the workers. Chavez countered with a $25-million libel suit.

The task of defending the UFW and its president fell to Ellen Eggers. She agonized. She convinced herself that Ganz was masterminding the plot, though she had doubts.

"I felt horrible," Eggers said. "Here were these farmworkers who had assumed leadership positions, paid by the growers. Everyone had high hopes for them. And I was defending the guy who fired them."

A decade later, Eggers would seek out Bustamante to apologize.

In 1982, a judge concluded that Chavez had acted illegally, because the reps were elected and not appointed. The victory was pyrrhic, since the contracts were expiring and many had lost their jobs.

Today Mario Bustamante runs a small taxi company in Calexico. He and Pelayo were recently denied UFW pensions because they fell short the necessary hours in their final year, after the fight occurred.

Chava Bustamante is a union leader again, the 1st vice president of a Service Employees International Union local representing California janitors and security guards.

Lopez still helps farmworkers in Salinas, as deputy at a nonprofit agency that finds housing solutions; he recently became the first farmworker on the board of the John Steinbeck Center.

"I'm part of the union. We did great things together," Lopez said. The UFW experience, he said, transformed him from a shy immigrant with an elementary school education into a community leader. "No matter what happened, we're part of the movement. We're part of history. The union missed a really great opportunity to have farmworker leadership on top. There were really good people."

Photographs by Don Bartletti *Los Angeles Times*

MIXED FEELINGS: *Doug Adair joined the UFW in 1965, a day before the Delano grape strike. After the convention in 1981, he was labeled a traitor for nominating Rosario Pelayo to the UFW board. Now he grows dates in Thermal, Calif.*

REFLECTING: *Dolores Huerta, in front of Cesar Chavez's grave, has started her own foundation and is no longer involved with the union. Huerta says Chavez, sometimes misunderstood, was fighting to save the organization.*

LOOKING BACK: *Mario Bustamante and Rosario Pelayo, in the UFW's former Calexico office, were both driven out of the union. They still recall with pride the days when Pelayo ran the union facility in Calexico, which has reverted to its old use: a place where laborers gather to wait for work.*

Activism timeline

Cesar Chavez rose to national prominence through his campaign to win higher wages, better working conditions and respect for farmworkers. Here are key points in the history of this movement:

1962: Chavez forms precursor to UFW, the National Farm Workers Assn.

1965: First grape strike starts in Delano and spreads in Central Valley.

1966: Chavez leads thousands of farmworkers on 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento.

1967: First national grape boycott begins.

1968: Chavez's first fast, to promote nonviolence. Fast broken with U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

1970: Central Valley table grape growers, under pressure from boycott's success, agree to sign contracts. Lettuce and vegetable strike starts in Salinas Valley after growers sign Teamsters contracts.

1973: Table grape growers also sign contracts with Teamsters, costing UFW most of its members. Strikes, violence, second national grape boycott follow; UFW, now part of AFL-CIO, drafts its first constitution.

1975: Agricultural Labor Relations Act signed, due to combined pressure of boycott, strikes, other protests. Union representation elections begin; Harris Poll reports 17 million Americans boycotting grapes in early 1970s.

1977: UFW signs pact in which Teamsters agree not to try to organize farmworkers.

1979: Lettuce and vegetable strikes start in Imperial, then Salinas valleys. By fall, UFW signs contracts with record wage increases, 50% over three years.

1984: Third grape boycott starts, focused on pesticide use; has little effect and ends in 2000.

1988: Chavez engages in final fast, tied to pesticide boycott.

1993: Chavez dies; son-in-law Arturo Rodriguez takes over union.

Sources: Times reporting

Los Angeles Times

About This Series

Quotes and historical references are drawn from letters, board minutes, memos and statements and tape recordings made during the 1970s and 1980s. The material is housed in the UFW archives at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University in Detroit.

SUNDAY: The UFW betrays its legacy as farmworkers struggle.

MONDAY: The family business: Insiders benefit amid a complex web of charities.

TODAY: The roots of today's problems go back three decades.

WEDNESDAY: A UFW success story — but not in the fields.

On the Web

For previous stories and additional photos, visit *latimes.com/ufw*.

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Exiled Workers Still Ask Why

[*History, from Page A1*]
one of the UFW's top organizers and a board member until 1978. "And then it began to fall apart. . . . At the time we were having our greatest success, Cesar got sidetracked. Cesar was more interested in leading a social movement than a union per se."

The story of Chavez's erratic leadership during a pivotal period emerged in bits and pieces at the time but has not been fully told before. Many who left the UFW were for a long time reluctant to discuss the union for fear of harming an institution and cause they still believe in deeply. Today, an extensive review of historical letters, minutes, memos and tapes of meetings, along with scores of interviews with participants, paints the first detailed portrait of a critical and turbulent time.

The decisions Chavez made a quarter of a century ago shaped the union and Farm Worker Movement today, turning it away from the core mission of organizing farmworkers. His actions drove out a generation of talented labor leaders; he replaced them with handpicked loyalists — including many of the people now running the organization. He quashed dissent and increased his control just as the union's growth made that more problematic.

He became increasingly concerned with traitors, spoke of malignant forces and publicly purged the young and old. He turned on proteges, some of his earliest supporters and close friends. His actions so baffled them that many years later they still seek explanations.

For a decade, he had been an internationally acclaimed, visionary leader, a brilliant strategist who inspired dozens of talented people to follow him. He had built a volunteer movement that galvanized public support to change the lives of farmworkers, bringing them dignity as well as higher wages. In California, he had pushed through the only law in the country that gives farmworkers the right to vote for union representation — establishing a legal framework that the UFW had been quick to exploit, winning dozens of elections and contracts.

As the UFW board gathered in February 1977 at the Synanon campus, there was a moment of opportunity to solidify those gains. Instead, Chavez became focused on building a community at the UFW's rambling headquarters in the Tehachapi Mountains. He railed about inefficiency, obsessing about the cost of telephone bills or questioning a $7.20 brake repair bill. He led committees that discussed celebrating movement anniversaries instead of birthdays. He studied mind healing and practiced curing illness by laying on hands.

For more than a year, Chavez required staff members to drive as much as five hours every weekend to La Paz, the union's headquarters, to play the Game.

"Cesar was struggling with disloyalty within the ranks. Dederich says: 'This is how you deal with it.' The Game came to La Paz for control," said Chris Hartmire, a close Chavez aide who became the "game master" at La Paz, setting up the encounters.

Disciples said Chavez's eclectic interests and commitment to a movement were fundamental to his vision. "When people would accuse him of not being a union guy, he kind of took pride in that," said his son, Paul Chavez, who has carried on the social entrepreneur legacy by building affordable housing.

Said Marc Grossman, a Chavez public relations aide for many years and still the UFW spokesman: "He took as much personal satisfaction in converting someone to vegetarianism as to trade unionism. He really did."

Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the UFW, said in an interview that Chavez's brilliance was often misunderstood, and that during the turbulent years of the late 1970s he acted to defend the movement he built when it was under attack from insiders who thought they could run the union better. "It's very hard to build an organization, but it's very easy to unravel," she said.

Whether Chavez initiated the changes or responded defensively, the net result was the same. By 1982, he had driven out dissenting voices on the board, among the staff and in the fields. Key staff and architects of the union's early success were gone, along with the next generation of leaders in the fields. The UFW never regained the same momentum as a labor union for farmworkers.

Los Angeles Times

STANDING FIRM: *Strikers await UFW leader Cesar Chavez's arrival in a field near El Centro, Calif., on Feb. 1, 1979. The strike ultimately divided UFW leaders when Chavez pushed for a boycott. Strikers persisted and won some of the best contracts in union history. In 1982, the UFW took in a record $2.9 million in dues.*

DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

MOURNING: *Chavez and his wife, Helen, attend the funeral for Rufino Contreras on Feb. 14, 1979, four days after the striking farmworker was slain.*

Associated Press

CLASH IN THE FIELDS: *Monterey County sheriff's deputies struggle to keep UFW pickets off a cauliflower farm near Salinas, Calif., on Feb. 22, 1979.*

1977: The Purges

In December 1976, Nick Jones, a longtime left-leaning volunteer who had been directing the UFW boycott, was accused by Chavez of masterminding a communist conspiracy to bring down the union. "I was flabbergasted," said Jones. "It demoralized me more than anything else in my whole life."

Jones quit, his abrupt departure triggering protests from around the country. The boycott had been a powerful weapon for the union, publicizing the harsh conditions for farmworkers and exerting pressure on companies to sign contracts. A mix of volunteers, students and farmworkers, the boycotters were a close-knit group. Many moved from city to city, and Jones was a well-known and liked leader.

"An atmosphere of suspicion has developed, in which preposterous accusations can be made and acted upon indiscriminately. People have been fired on the basis of flimsy charges against them," the Seattle boycott staff wrote to Chavez, one of many letters that demanded either an explanation or an apology.

The response was one that would be offered repeatedly in the coming years: Cesar knows things you don't, and he is protecting the union. Hartmire, a much beloved Chavez confidant and Presbyterian minister, became the official apologist, and his reassurances kept many staff members in the fold.

"People would go to Chris and say, 'I don't know about this,' and he would say, 'I know it seems that way, but you don't see the whole picture; Cesar does,' " said Ellen Eggers, who worked as a lawyer for the UFW.

In meetings and memos, Chavez stressed the need to foster community at La Paz, the isolated former tuberculosis sanatorium east of Bakersfield where he had moved the union in 1971. Chavez urged a greater role for children who had grown up in the movement and understood its values. He criticized board members for tolerating bad and subversive behavior because they were desperate for staff. He brought in management consultants and tried to find the ideal structure.

"The big problem we face is we haven't made up our minds what kind of union we want to be. Or if we're going to be a union," he told a group of staff after they had played the Game.

At a community meeting on April 4, 1977, that became known as the "Monday night massacre," volunteers were viciously attacked and expelled for sins ranging from smoking pot to betraying the union. "It was planned, and it was brutal," said Larry Tramutola, then a high-ranking union leader who participated in the denunciations.

Deirdre Godfrey was one of those expelled; she described in a letter to the executive board how security guards followed and threatened her that evening when she made a call to find a place to live: "I have never spent such a fearful night. . . . I shall never forget the frenzied, hate-filled faces and voices of people who had been warm and friendly with me right through to the hour of the meeting."

Over the next year, Chavez continued to denounce popular workers as communist infiltrators. A volunteer in her 70s was turned out with no place to live. In the middle of a wedding reception, Chavez vilified a young woman who had lived in his house as a teenager, ordering her thrown off the grounds just weeks after she had successfully negotiated a contract.

Huerta said it was a time when security had become a major concern in the loose-knit organization, after Chavez received death threats. "If Cesar was a little paranoid, there's a reason for it," she said.

Some former UFW leaders now say they had qualms about the purges, but justified or ignored them. They were winning elections. Some of the threats were real.

"You could see you were making a difference. You could put up, rationalize, accept, maybe even believe in it, as long as something bigger was happening," Tramutola said.

"I hoped it would go away," said Medina, then a vice president on the board. "It never did."

For many years, Jones, the onetime UFW boycott director, blamed Medina and other board members for not standing up to Chavez. "But no, it was all of us," Jones said recently. "All of those people who used to roll out the carpet and lay it at his feet — he cut their throats."

1978: Turmoil on the Board

Marshall Ganz, the son of a Bakersfield rabbi, had dropped out of Harvard and joined the UFW after a stint in the civil rights movement in the South. Passionate, fluent in Spanish, more popular among workers than staff, Ganz was a shrewd and relentless organizer who exuded brash confidence and backed it up with results. He was close to Chavez in an almost father-son way that caused resentment and occasional antipathy even among allies.

Ganz had helped oust Jones, but by 1978 he had grown troubled by Chavez's reluctance to tackle key issues: Should the union focus on the vineyards, its symbolic heart, or on the vegetable fields, where it had built a strong base of support? Should organizers try to win more elections and add members, or consolidate and work on administering contracts effectively?

Ganz laid out his criticism in a private letter; Chavez shared it with the board. At a March 25 meeting, Ganz explained to board members what prompted his scathing letter:

"We had all these problems out there that we had to deal with that were crucial. It was very frustrating to me, what I felt was the lack of planning, the lack of direction, just sort of going from here to there, and frittering resources and time," Ganz is heard saying on a tape of the board meeting. "And in the meantime, a lot of Cesar's attention seemed to be on the Game and on Synanon and on La Paz."

Ganz warned the board that he saw another looming problem: The union was not giving real power or responsibility to workers or involving them in decisions: "We just seem to assume that whatever way we decide to go is automatically OK. It's not automatically OK."

Ganz's base was Steinbeck country, the rich fields of Salinas, where the UFW had 17 contracts covering 7,200 farmworkers (about the size of the entire union today), including many of the most ardent and militant union supporters.

Salinas was also home to the UFW's legal department, 18 lawyers who bailed out picketers and battled growers under the direction of Jerry Cohen, a young lawyer recruited by Chavez. Cohen relished a fight, and he excelled at using irreverent tactics to push the envelope and score victories.

"He was my idol," said Salvador Bustamante, a farmworker who wrote a poem about Cohen after watching him negotiate with growers. "I loved seeing him deal with them, avenging every affront they ever did to me."

Cohen had helped craft many of the union's early victories, from the law protecting union activity in the fields to the pact keeping Teamsters out. The legal department was in Salinas because he refused to live in La Paz.

Cohen had thought Chavez was comfortable with that decision, which placed the lawyers closer to many courts, though distant from union headquarters. But at the Synanon meeting, Cohen discovered otherwise: The lawyer got "Gamed" about why he abandoned his friend Cesar and moved to Salinas.

In an organization where most staff were volunteers, paid $5 a week plus free room and board, UFW lawyers had special status: They earned about $600 a month. In the spring of 1978, each lawyer asked for a $400-a-month raise.

Chavez seized on the requests and turned them into a referendum on the larger issue of whether the union would have paid staff. He painted the lawyers as greedy and unwilling to sacrifice like everyone else and said acceding to their demand would be a prelude to destroying the volunteer organization. He asked the board to vote in support of the status quo, effectively dismantling the legal operation.

Cohen and Ganz countered that a stable of professionals who could afford to stick with the union was critical, particularly as the contracts in Salinas were expiring. The debate was so heated the executive board adjourned for 10 days. Chavez eventually won by one vote, and most of the lawyers left soon after, replaced by a smaller operation at La Paz.

"It wasn't about money; it was about control," said Cohen, who resigned as chief counsel but stayed during a transition.

To Medina, the vote was one more sign the UFW was headed in the wrong direction. A farmworker who had risen quickly to a leadership position, Medina was widely viewed in the fields and among staff as the logical successor to Chavez. But Medina had been unhappy for months. "We sort of had become focused on everything except going out and organizing farmworkers," he said.

Organizing was what he excelled at: In the three months he had run the department, Medina reported at the June board meeting, the UFW had won 13 elections and gained 3,030 members.

Just three months later, Arturo Rodriguez, who has since become UFW president, gave a very different report: He told the board that organizing prospects were grim.

Asked what it would take to win elections, according to minutes from the meeting: "Brother Artie responded that he wasn't really sure. . . . Brother Cesar said he doesn't think we can do very much about organizing right now."

The last item on the September agenda was Medina's resignation. Ganz, though more a competitor than a friend, argued that the board should

[*See History, Page A19*]

Los Angeles Times

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SPENCER WEINER *Los Angeles Times*

An Offshore Remembrance for Mudslide Victims

Relatives and friends of 10 people who died in a landslide that hit the Ventura County hamlet of La Conchita gather on surfboards to pay their respects Tuesday, the first anniversary of the disaster. They shared stories, tossed flowers and cheered before surfing back to shore.

Gov.'s Budget Cuts Welfare, Boosts Schools

Schwarzenegger also seeks billions for transit. Lawmakers of both parties are lukewarm to the $125.6-billion election-year plan.

By EVAN HALPER AND DAN MORAIN
Times Staff Writers

SACRAMENTO — California welfare recipients were the only group targeted for major cuts Tuesday when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger presented a $125.6-billion budget that would increase payments to education and transportation by billions of dollars.

The election-year proposal was a marked departure from past Schwarzenegger spending plans that called for reductions across the board. The small savings the state could achieve from suspending cost-of-living increases and cutting other programs for the poor would do little to address the multibillion-dollar deficits that California still faces for the next several years.

Schwarzenegger's plan would have the state spend $6.4 billion more than it expects to receive in revenue for fiscal 2006-07, but the difference would be covered by carrying over a surplus from the current budget year, due to the improved economy. But the chronic imbalance will leave lawmakers to confront another budget shortfall of roughly that amount the next year. The Republican governor's announcement comes a week after he proposed $68 billion in new borrowing for public works projects, which also will add to future deficits.

Schwarzenegger made no apologies for the new spending. He said at a news conference that the state's budget shortfall — once $16.5 billion — has shrunk significantly since he took office, and the lingering deficit is a small price to pay for holding the line against new taxes while providing valuable services to Californians. And unlike past budgets, the plan does not rely on accounting gimmicks and loans to give the appearance of being balanced.

"This budget I am proposing

[*See Budget, Page A18*]

Major changes

Highlights of the governor's 2006 general fund budget:

Winners

- K-12 schools get $1.7 billion more than funding formulas require.
- Cal State and UC students avoid planned fee increases.
- Healthcare programs are expanded for low-income children.

Losers

- CalWORKs, the state's welfare-to-work program, would be cut by $198.9 million in child care and other areas.
- Supplementary Security Income payments for the disabled would be curtailed by $48.1 million because of the suspension of cost-of-living payments.

Fiscal outlook

- No new taxes
- Budget spends $97.9 billion against $91.5 billion in revenue, but is balanced due to unanticipated tax revenue.
- $6.6 billion shortfall forecast in 2007.

Source: www.ebudget.ca.gov

Los Angeles Times

COLUMN ONE

Spain's Little Piece of Africa

■ The enclave of Melilla considers itself a model of multiculturalism. But some say blissful coexistence is a myth amid tension and fear.

By TRACY WILKINSON
Times Staff Writer

MELILLA, Spain — As evening descends along King Juan Carlos Avenue, shopkeepers shutter their stores and people stroll and chat amiably, some in Spanish, and just as many in Tamazight, a Berber dialect.

On a nearby two-block stretch, sparkly Christmas decorations have been strung across the street from Mohammed's Gift Store, around the corner from the Hindu temple and a couple of doors from the 80-year-old synagogue. The Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church tolls its bells for evening prayers.

And a few steps away, the Cervantes Cafe is halal, in accordance with Islamic dietary law.

For half a millennium, the Spanish have held on to this little piece of Africa, an enclave carved by conquistadors chasing the last Moors from Catholic Spain. Melilla and its sister enclave, Ceuta, are sovereign Spanish territory with Spanish citizens and flag, geographically in what is today Morocco: the last remnants of Europe in Africa.

The city's leaders hold up Melilla, the more remote of the two enclaves, as a shining example of ethnic coexistence that can serve as a model for an increasingly divided world. The Melilla mantra, repeated faithfully by politicians and community leaders, goes like this: four religions living side by side in harmony sharing less than 5 square miles and 500 years of history.

Catholics, Muslims, Jews and Hindus do get along better here than in most places these days. But just below the surface, there is tension, latent mistrust and uncertainty over Melilla's identity, economic well-being and future.

Melilla's Christian majority is losing ground to a fast-growing, younger Muslim community that will one day surpass it. Jews have been leaving steadily for years. The Muslims, while making economic gains, still lag behind in their share of political power.

These changes feed a debate over the "Spanishness" of the place and its people, and whether Melilla will survive as a successful experiment in multiculturalism, or descend into dangerous fragmentation.

"Melilla is like a married couple that lives together, they have their suspicions about one an-

[*See Melilla, Page A4*]

Alito Tells Skeptical Democrats He Would Keep an Open Mind

By MAURA REYNOLDS, DAVID G. SAVAGE AND RICHARD SIMON
Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court nominee Samuel A. Alito Jr. sought to distance himself Tuesday from conservative political opinions he expressed more than 20 years ago, stressing in his confirmation hearing that good judges did not allow personal views to color their legal judgments.

But his comments were greeted with skepticism by Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, who said Alito's views as a Reagan administration lawyer probably signaled how he would rule as a justice — especially on abortion.

On his first day of questioning by the committee, Alito changed the script used by some previous high court nominees — including Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. — who frustrated lawmakers by declining to answer questions on various legal issues because, they said, they might have to rule on them. By contrast, in a steady, dispassionate voice, Alito offered more expansive replies.

Several queries focused on whether the president had the right to skirt federal laws on the treatment of prisoners of war or on warrantless wiretaps.

The issues have been spotlighted recently by White House efforts to block a congressional ban on torturing "enemy combatants" and the revelation that after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, President Bush authorized wiretapping inside the United States without court ap-

[*See Alito, Page A13*]

RELATED STORY

Analysis: Democrats challenge Alito on an array of issues. **A12**

1st Suit in State to Attack 'Intelligent Design' Filed

By HENRY WEINSTEIN
Times Staff Writer

A group of parents in the small Tehachapi mountain community of Lebec on Tuesday filed the first lawsuit challenging the teaching of "intelligent design" in a California public school.

The suit targets what appears to be the latest wrinkle in the continuing national fight between supporters and opponents of teaching evolution in public schools — a course that says it examines the debate as an issue of "philosophy."

Supporters of intelligent design lost a court fight in Pennsylvania last month that both sides had seen as a test case. U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III rejected the Dover, Pa., school board's decision to teach intelligent design as part of a science course, ruling that design was "an interesting theological argument, but . . . not science."

In this case, the parents say in their suit that school officials in Lebec — a town of about 1,300 just west of Interstate 5 in Kern County and about 63 miles north

[*See Evolution, Page A14*]

Iran Breaks Atomic Seals Amid West's Ire

European ministers will discuss whether Tehran should be referred to the U.N. Security Council.

By JOHN DANISZEWSKI AND ALISSA J. RUBIN
Times Staff Writers

LONDON — Global criticism rained down on Iran on Tuesday after it broke seals set by the International Atomic Energy Agency on a nuclear enrichment facility in Natanz, ending a two-year freeze on activities that Western leaders fear could lead to the enrichment of uranium to build nuclear weapons.

In response, European ministers scheduled an urgent meeting for Thursday to determine whether to recommend that Iran face proceedings before the U.N. Security Council that could result in economic sanctions.

Several nations said Tuesday's action by Iran's new hardline government led by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was unnecessary and provocative. The Islamic Republic has insisted that it intends to use nuclear energy solely to operate power-generating plants, but governments including the United States strongly suspect that Iran plans to use the research to build atomic arms.

Although breaking the seals

[*See Iran, Page A6*]

UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

FAMILY: *Consuelo Nuño and brother Eliseo Medina hug at a 2005 event marking the 1965 grape strike in which they took part.*

Former Chavez Ally Took His Own Path

Where Eliseo Medina has gone, unions have grown. His successes in organizing immigrants show what farmworkers lost — but can find again, he believes.

By MIRIAM PAWEL
Times Staff Writer

Last of four parts

At 21, the farmworker from Delano with an eighth-grade education hopped an airplane for the first time, with $20, a bag of UFW buttons to sell and the name of a Chicago postal worker loyal to the union cause.

The kid from the tiny town in the Central Valley who landed on John Armendariz's doorstep in 1967 was totally green — amazed at the city traffic, baffled by Chicago's El and faced with a daunting task: Get supermarkets to stop selling grapes.

Armendariz had watched his five children grapple with fear in different ways, and he wondered how Eliseo Medina would cope, without even winter clothes.

"His were real fears," Armendariz said. "How do you introduce yourself? How do you talk to people? He did an amazing job of controlling that."

[*See Medina, Page A16*]

Plot Thickens in the Case of the Tainted Detective

A former officer and a girlfriend of Anthony Pellicano plead guilty in cases linked to the investigator's suspected use of illegal wiretaps.

By GREG KRIKORIAN
Times Staff Writer

The investigation of former Hollywood private eye Anthony Pellicano took a significant turn Tuesday with the disclosure that his onetime girlfriend and a veteran Beverly Hills police officer have pleaded guilty to lying about the detective's use of wiretaps and other illegal tactics.

The pleas by Officer Craig Stevens and Sandra Will Carradine, the ex-wife of actor Keith Carradine, offered the first confirmation in the 3-year-old federal investigation that authorities have evidence of Pellicano's long-suspected illegal use of wiretaps and confidential law enforcement records.

The documents also provide the first official link between the Pellicano case and the law firm of one of Los Angeles' most prominent entertainment attorneys, Bert Fields.

The documents state that Stevens, who resigned last Friday after 24 years on the Beverly Hills force, used police computers to gather information on an individual who was battling a client of Fields' firm, Greenberg, Glusker, Fields, Claman, Machtinger & Kinsella.

Fields could not be reached for comment. His attorney, John W. Keker, denied any illegal activity by his client.

"Bert Fields is completely innocent of any wrongdoing," Keker said. "And if there is any wrongdoing involving Anthony Pellicano, he didn't have anything to do with it and certainly didn't benefit from it. And neither did anyone at Greenberg Glusker."

The firm has acknowledged that Pellicano worked on a number of its cases. On Tuesday its attorney Brian Sun said: "Neither the firm nor any of its attorneys who worked on the [Ste-

[*See Pellicano, Page A14*]

INSIDE

MIKE MERGEN *Bloomberg News*

PRESSURING GM: *An advisor to Kirk Kerkorian, above, calls on the automaker to slash its dividend and purge two brands to conserve cash.* **C1**

IRS Program to Identify Tax Cheats Criticized
An internal report says the agency forces taxpayers to endure needless delays to receive refunds they deserve. **A9**

Warren Dorn Dies
The former chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors was 87. **B10**

Bremer Settles Scores
The highest U.S. official in Iraq in the aftermath of the invasion uses his book for payback. **E1**

Weather
Partly cloudy and cooler, remaining partly cloudy tonight. L.A. Downtown: 69/51. **B14**

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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Medina family photo

IN STEP: *Eliseo Medina and Dolores Huerta march in Chicago in 1971. Medina had arrived in the city to mount a boycott effort four years earlier, unsure about even simple tasks such as introducing himself.*

Organizer Gains in Other Fields

[*Medina, from Page A1*]

Drawing on the kindness of strangers, his charm and his wits, Medina built a boycott operation that kept grapes out of a major Midwest supermarket chain, helping force California growers to negotiate the first contracts with the UFW.

Today the trademark smile that lights up his whole face is unchanged, but the scared kid has grown into a graying giant of the labor movement. He has helped orchestrate labor's rise in Southern California, has become a key player in the national immigration debate and now oversees locals in 17 states as executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

If not for Cesar Chavez, Medina might still be in Delano, picking grapes and shooting pool at People's bar. Instead, he is the preeminent example of a generation of activists nurtured by the UFW and its founders.

But Medina is organizing janitors and healthcare workers, not farmworkers. His life illustrates another part of the Chavez legacy: The UFW founder drove out many of the union's most committed labor leaders, who quit the fields and turned their talents to other causes.

Medina was once the obvious heir apparent to Chavez. Even in his youth, he displayed a similar charismatic appeal and tactical brilliance.

"He would have been president if he'd stayed," said Dolores Huerta, cofounder of the union.

In August 1978, Medina resigned as a vice president of the UFW, frustrated by Chavez's insistence on an all-volunteer staff and his reluctance to give workers greater power. "At a time when we should have been focused on consolidating and building the union, we got involved in a lot of things that drew attention from what I felt was our priority mission," Medina said.

Chavez, Medina concluded, was caught up in the idea of creating a poor people's movement.

"My interest was building a farmworkers union," Medina said. "The goal was not building a farmworkers movement per se. It created a lot of tension."

Medina's success in the intervening years has proved a union can negotiate better wages and working conditions for undocumented immigrants — a stark counterpoint to the excuses offered by the current leaders of the UFW to justify their failures.

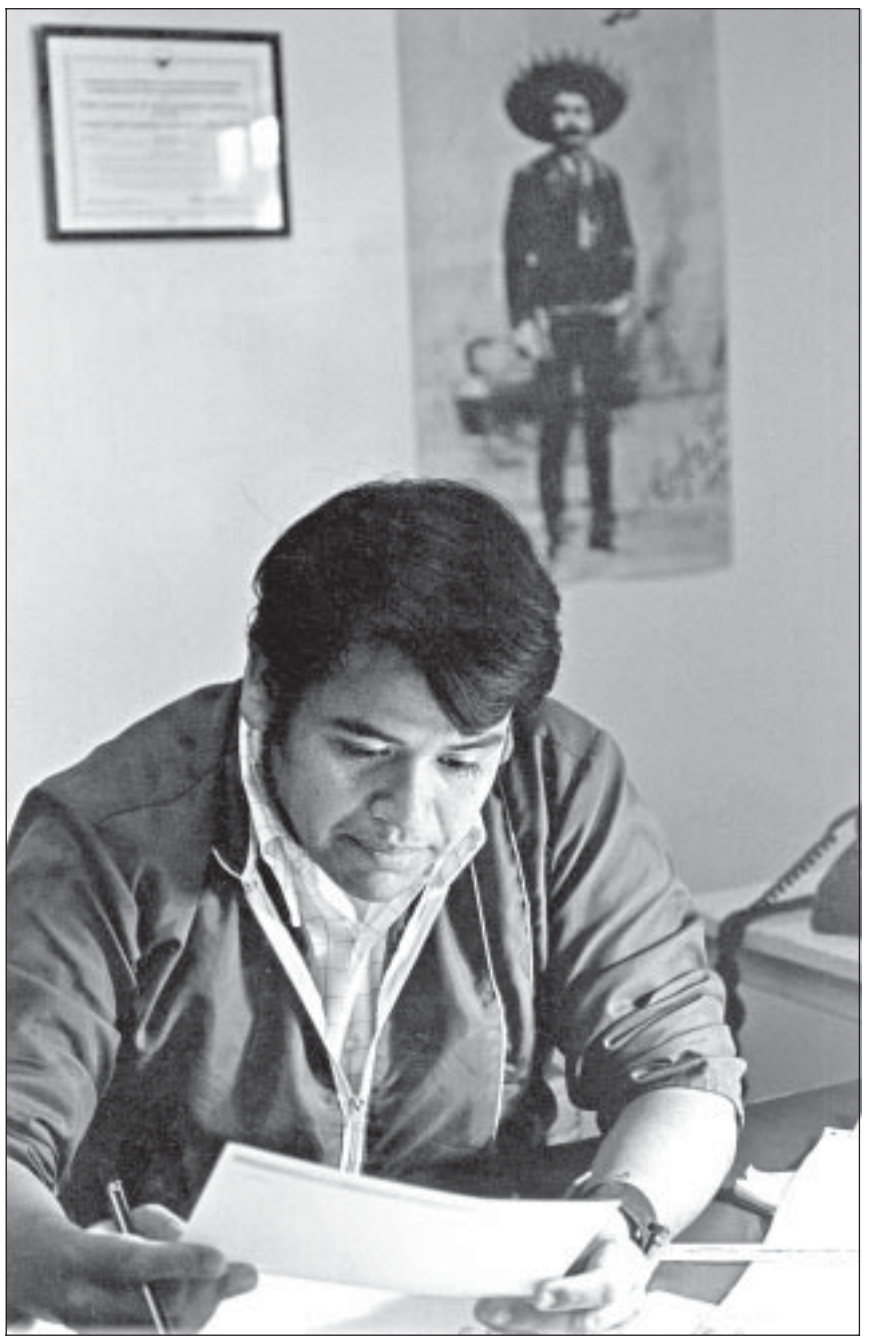
Around Delano, the farming town where the UFW began, people still ask when Medina is coming back. His older sister hears it all the time.

Consuelo Nuño lives in the house where she and Medina grew up. At 63, she works in a vineyard six days a week. Her wages went up a quarter when labor was scarce last summer, to $7 an hour, and the bonus for every full box of grapes is 2 cents more than it was four decades ago when she joined the UFW's first historic grape strike.

Bleak numbers like those encourage some friends to hope Medina might return to tackle the unfinished cause that launched his career. A split in the national labor movement this summer heightened such speculation.

SEIU led several unions that left the AFL-CIO and formed a new coalition, vowing to put more resources into organizing workers. The UFW has joined the coalition, and two other unions in the group have contracts with farmworkers; whether they will join forces remains unclear.

Medina voices enthusiasm for a coordinated campaign to organize farmworkers, but demurs about his own role. "There needs to be a farmworkers union," he said. "I hope that will come out of this. It's certainly going to happen in every other occupation. Why should agriculture be any different?"



Cathy Murphy

WITH THE UFW: *A picture of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata hangs behind Medina in his La Paz office in this 1976 photo. Both men fought for the rights of farm laborers, though Medina armed himself with pen and paper.*

From Huanusco to Chicago

The leaders of Huanusco recently commissioned a statue to honor the generations of emigrants who have left the small Mexican town in Zacatecas and traveled north. They are dedicating it to the town's favorite son, Eliseo Vasquez Medina.

He was born there almost 60 years ago, the son of a bracero who worked in the California fields under the guest worker program. At 10, Eliseo moved to Delano, after spending almost two years in Tijuana waiting for permission because his mother insisted on obtaining legal entry. Eliseo entered fourth grade speaking no English; his mother and two older sisters went to work in the Central Valley fields.

Eliseo joined them there full time after eighth grade. He was skilled at trimming grape vines so they would grow out the right way, not in a clump that would be difficult to pick, but so bad at picking tomatoes just when they showed a touch of red that people thought he was colorblind.

Conditions in the fields were difficult; there were no toilets or drinking water, and often workers would have to camp out in front of the grower's office all day Saturday to get paid for the week.

"We all hated the way the system worked," he recalled.

In 1965, El Malcriado, a brash UFW newspaper that combined news with irreverent humor, wrote about how the union had forced the state to fine a major labor contractor who had underpaid his workers. Medina took note: "To see somebody brought up and made to pay back wages, to me that was terribly impressive."

The rest of the story he has told hundreds of times, sometimes in English, sometimes in Spanish, somehow sounding fresh each time, always using his life to gently make points about organizing workers:

How clever Chavez was to call the first mass meeting on Mexican Independence Day, when he would get a good crowd. How Medina was taken aback by Chavez's small stature, doubting someone so unimpressive looking could be a great leader — but then blown away by his speech and moral force. How he went home and scrounged up change to pay $10.50 for three months' dues. How he began to picket because he heard they paid money ("I didn't know what picketing meant, but $1.20 an hour seemed pretty good to me," he told a group of SEIU organizers), and then discovered the power of the picket line.

Barely more than a year after he broke open his piggy bank to pay dues, Medina was on the cover of El Malcriado as one of the UFW's "Young Tigers," Chavez's youthful lieutenants successfully taking on the powerful growers.

When he arrived in Chicago to run the boycott, he opened the phone book and called the A&P.

"I said, 'Hi, I'm a farmworker and I'd like you to stop selling grapes,' " Medina recalled.

He was, as he often says in speeches, "one scared kid," so shy that his sister remembers seeing him on television at a news conference where he could not open his mouth. He soon was moving confidently in many circles, building support through publicity stunts like pray-ins over grapes in supermarket aisles. The sophisticated boycott operation not only stopped the sale of grapes in major stores but also raised thousands of dollars to support the UFW.

Medina was already attracting followers. In 1971, Dorothy Johnson, a quiet boycott volunteer with a wry wit and quick laugh, picked Chicago for her next assignment because of Medina's reputation for innovative and effective campaigns. She ended up following him to Calexico, Calif.; Florida; Ohio; back to Chicago and then back to California in 1975 when the state adopted a law regulating union activity in the fields. The two were married at his mother's house in Delano in 1976 between election campaigns and contract negotiations.

Medina's years in the union compensated for the education he never got in school; for someone with an insatiable curiosity about people, the UFW was a sumptuous buffet. He showed a knack for devising clever ways around obstacles. When growers began circumventing the union's election victories by filing objections and dragging the appeals out for months, Medina figured out a solution: Keep striking citrus workers off the job just long enough to extract a promise from the company to recognize the union and negotiate a contract.

The tactic was key to the union's winning more than 3,000 new members in the spring of 1978 — nearly half as many farmworkers as the UFW represents altogether today.

Leaving — His Way

When Medina left the UFW in the summer of 1978, his departure was as unexplained as it was sudden. Scott Washburn was at a meeting in Santa Maria where Medina outlined the next organizing battle. They walked outside, and on the way to the car, Medina mentioned that he had quit.

"When something's hard, I struggle with it. But once I decide, I move forward," Medina said in a recent interview. "I thought for months and months; I was having a very difficult time. It took me a while to come to grips with the fact that it would be best if I just moved on."

That internal struggle was all but invisible even to those closest to him. Unlike others who left about the same time and for similar reasons, Medina did not voice criticism. He has always talked publicly about how much Chavez and the UFW did for him, and not about the disappointments that led him to leave, or his conviction that Chavez had taken the union in the wrong direction at the very moment it had an opportunity to become a lasting force. He did not tell his family why he left, and he has never talked about it with his sister.

"Eliseo is a closed box," said Sabino Lopez, a former farmworker who later worked for Medina organizing janitors in San Diego.

Washburn, who has known Medina since 1973 and worked for him at two unions, describes him as a loyal friend who keeps his feelings to himself. It is all about the job.

"I'm sure he's concerned with me, and I'm concerned with him, but we're both obsessed with organizing," Washburn said.

That obsession drove Medina's frustration during his last months with the UFW, when he felt Chavez often was focused on everything but organizing workers. The relationship between the two, once warm, deteriorated.

Chavez publicly attacked Medina over a proposal he made about hiring organizers, and the exchange made a big impression on others.

"It wasn't unusual for Cesar to do that; it was unusual for him to do it to Eliseo," remembered Washburn.

After Medina resigned, he dismissed entreaties to change his mind, rejecting the idea that his departure would have a profound effect on the union.

"It's important not to believe your own PR," he likes to remind people.

In San Diego, more than a decade later, Sabino Lopez confronted Medina about having disappeared with no explanation to farmworkers.

"When you left, we felt like we lost our hope, the next generation," Lopez recalled telling Medina. " . . . You were, for us, the guy. You were the heart and

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UFW: A BROKEN CONTRACT

Photographs by DON BARTLETTI *Los Angeles Times*

STILL WORKING: *Consuelo Nuño started as a grape picker at 15 in Delano, Calif. Now 63, she continues to work in a vineyard six days a week. She got a raise to $7 an hour last summer, and the bonus for each box picked is 2 cents more than in 1965. Around town, people still ask when her brother, Eliseo Medina, is coming back.*

CHANGE: *New mobile homes stand where a dilapidated farm labor complex once was in Pajaro, Calif. Sabino Lopez, a former farmworker who worked with Medina, is deputy director of the nonprofit firm behind the project. When Medina left the farmworkers union, Lopez recalled, "we felt like we lost our hope."*

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soul."

Medina told him he had felt as though he was causing problems more than solving them.

"As organizers, our personal credibility is all we have," Medina said recently. "If you don't believe what you're saying, it comes through. At that point, I didn't feel good about what I was doing."

Taking Risks

Medina enjoys playing two games: Chess and pool.

"In both," he said, "you have to plan your next moves."

He sharpened his pool game in Delano at the UFW hangout, People's bar. Then in Chicago, where the boycott crew depended on handouts for pretty much everything, a donated chess set provided free entertainment.

In games and work, Medina advocates taking risks. Big risks bring big gains, a lesson he learned from watching Chavez gamble on tactics like the boycott: "Who would have ever thought that sending out a bunch of uneducated farmworkers to stop grapes could work?"

When Medina landed at SEIU in 1986, after organizing university workers in California and public employees in Texas, the task was taking over a failing public employee union in San Diego. Within five years, membership went from 1,700 to 10,000 as he rebuilt the local and then took over a far larger rival union.

"The minnow swallowed the whale," he likes to say, the closest he comes to a boast.

In 1991, Medina got a call asking for help from an old UFW acquaintance. Liza Hirsch Du Brul had become a New York labor lawyer, representing musicians around the country. The San Diego Symphony was in the midst of a contract dispute and the musicians needed to stage a protest, but she was stuck on the East Coast.

Medina agreed to organize a human billboard around symphony hall.

When she took him to lunch to thank him, he told her he had been happy to help but pointed out that the musicians shouldn't be relying on "borrowed power" and needed to organize themselves.

He was separated and she was widowed; though they had known each other only slightly, their shared experiences over the same decade in the UFW were a common bond. They got together soon after and were married one morning at City Hall four years later. Medina had to duck out on a celebratory lunch after the ceremony because a candidate running for president of SEIU was in town.

That was a prelude to another big risk: Medina backed the long-shot candidate, Andy Stern. When Stern won, it cemented Medina's position in the leadership of SEIU. In 1996, he became the first Mexican American to assume a top position in the union.

WARM MEETING: *Former UFW chief counsel Jerry Cohen, left, and Medina relive old times and talk about future possibilities at a reunion in Delano in September. Both left the UFW after it moved away from unionizing more workers.*

"There is no more dignified, thoughtful, humble person in this movement," Stern said recently. He described Medina as a rare species, the pragmatic dreamer: "Thinking big enough that it's a little bit beyond your reach but not so outrageous — but also building the operation to get it done."

While based in Los Angeles, Medina was the behind-the-scenes architect of two recent campaigns that organized workers who had never been unionized: Justice for Janitors, and a new union for home healthcare workers. In 1997, SEIU signed up 74,000 home healthcare workers in Los Angeles County, then expanded across Southern California.

"He continues to push people beyond what they think they can do," said Marion Steeg, who worked for Medina both in the UFW and SEIU. And the work always comes first. "No matter how much he loves you, he will move you around to get the job done. . . . But it's never vindictive. It's never personal."

Medina's role within SEIU gradually expanded. In 2000, his arguments were key to the AFL-CIO's decision to shift its position on immigration reform; until then the labor federation had opposed any efforts to regularize the status of illegal immigrants.

Stern has watched Medina grow over the years into a more forceful advocate willing to challenge authority.

"I think he's sort of gained a level of confidence and appreciation that he has an opportunity to become a voice for lots of people like him when he was growing up," Stern said.

Today Medina oversees SEIU's operations in 17 states in the South and Southwest, organizing campaigns in states with little record of embracing unions. He describes the mission as a risk.

"Most people think that's for young kids. At my age, I could fail," he said. He shrugs, unconcerned. "Nobody ever guarantees you you're going to win. You can't ever just do things when you have a guarantee. You can't."

Applying the UFW's Lessons

Medina is standing in a cavernous Las Vegas ballroom, talking about building a movement, not just a union. About how the people in this room, most of them not born during the anti-Vietnam War protests or the grape boycotts, can become a force comparable to those historic movements, a force that changes America.

"We're building a union where there's no previous model. We're either going to create something new, or we're going to crash and burn," he tells them. "But we'll crash and burn together."

More than 100 SEIU organizers, most of them recruited in the last six months, are preparing to win converts in some of the least union-friendly states in the country: Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Nevada. Medina is firing them up to beat the odds. He flashes a slide showing that their union's penetration in Texas is 0.00009%. His arms are waving and suddenly his whole face lights up: "Hell, how can we miss? Everywhere you look, there's an unorganized worker."

The campaign Medina constructed in the Southwest has much in common with the early days of the UFW, and he draws on familiar strategies.

Coalition building: "Ministers see them in church Sunday, we see them at work Monday," he says, urging alliances with religious leaders.

A sense of moral outrage: He lists five reasons that the union should be fighting to change the current immigration system. "And the sixth reason is, it's just wrong." The room bursts into applause.

Creative experimentation: "Very few times do organizers ever get a blank slate. Here it is: Draw your own picture," Medina exhorts them. "Build a new union that is activist, that is rooted in the workers, that can win."

He has also learned what not to do.

"Right hand, left hand," he mutters a lot. The right hand always needs to know what the left hand is doing. That's why he brought the organizers from four states together for three days.

"He's my hero," says Mitch Ackerman, SEIU director in Colorado and one of many who say they're there because of Medina. "Without him and his ideas . . . we'd be a bunch of disparate groups."

To excite them before they begin the drudgery of winning over converts — one by one, following workers home, persuading people to overcome their fears — Medina has drawn again on the experience of the UFW, having opened the meeting by bringing in Dolores Huerta and former antiwar activist Tom Hayden.

"They were people who had a vision, a burning thirst, a passion for justice," Medina says.

"I want people to leave here feeling like they too can make this happen," he says about the team he's assembled, who range from veterans like Washburn to 26-year-old Arnulfo De La Cruz, grandson of an original grape striker, born while his father was on a lemon strike in Oxnard that Medina directed.

When Huerta addresses the group, she talks about Medina: "He has to include himself of course in making history. He was such a big part of making sure the UFW survived. . . . Now you are all in those shoes — to make the history that will change the world."

Blended Worlds

Dichos are folk wisdom, short sayings in Spanish that can be straightforward or elliptical but always make a point.

Medina collects them, and can always find one suitable for any occasion or cause.

For the labor movement: "*Camaron que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente*" ("The shrimp that sleeps is carried away by the current").

For workers: "*El que no habla, Dios no lo oye*" ("He who doesn't speak, God doesn't hear").

"There is so much truth and clarity contained in a few words, that, for organizers, you can make a point without a lot of elaboration," he said. Sometimes he coins his own, just as he plays with words to come up with apt expressions to describe friends and colleagues.

Dichos also resonate with people he wants to reach.

"What makes Eliseo special is his ability to deal with people at their own level," said Salvador Bustamante, a UFW veteran who is now first vice president of SEIU's local representing California building workers. "He's very at ease with workers. That's his background. He really has the experience of working as a farmworker, of having experienced poverty, oppression, and that makes him special."

When the other top SEIU officials are in the front of the room, Stern said, he knows he will find Medina mingling in the back. At the UFW's 40th reunion in Delano this summer, while most speakers addressed the crowd of former boycott volunteers and strikers in English, Medina spoke in Spanish, the language of the workers whose accomplishments he was celebrating.

Medina moves easily between worlds, comfortable talking to low-wage workers, negotiating immigration policy in Washington or meeting with presidents in Central American countries.

His life is a similar melange. He earns $169,184, travels with his iPod and Treo, and is fond of electronic gadgets and Diet Pepsi and ice cream and watching football. He prefers Mexican food and does not drink coffee or alcohol or eat ripe fruit — he acquired a taste early for peaches the way farmworkers pick them, still hard.

His crusade for changes in immigration policy combines personal conviction with pragmatic concern; immigrants are the future of SEIU.

"It's another strategically smart move," said Washburn, the Arizona SEIU director. "And it's real. It comes from a real place."

So does Medina's commitment to helping farmworkers. He says it is both possible and necessary to organize farmworkers again, and is dismissive of the UFW's excuses for not doing more.

In the fields today, he and his sister agree, the UFW means little to people though its legacy still lingers for the older generation.

"What they did is they taught us how to defend ourselves," said Nuño. She works for a vineyard owned by the family of the same labor contractor that the UFW had gotten fined back in 1965, the story that first caught Medina's attention in the union newspaper.

"They are making a farmworkers union inevitable," Medina said. "It will happen. It's not a question of whether a farmworkers union is possible; it's a question of when it's going to happen."

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