Even the Bribri who were working in Talamanca in the 1920s when Nicaraguans began arriving in large numbers refer to them with depreciation:

We didn’t go near those people. At that time the Castellanos [Latinas] were bad and on pay days they would kill. We would always hurry back from the pay car. They would kill amongst themselves. The Blacks didn’t kill very much. All the dead were at the hands of the Castellanos, mostly Nicaraguans....

12.1.3 Guanacastecan and other Latin Laborers

According to informants from the period, the second most numerous group of Latins to enter the plantation labor force in the mid 1920s were Guanacastecans. Guanacaste is one of the poorest provinces of Costa Rica and borders on Nicaragua on the Pacific coast (see Map 3). In addition to suffering from an exceptionally harsh dry season, historically it has been dominated by extensive cattle haciendas. Indeed, during the 1920s and 1930s Guanacaste was subject to a structural transformation similar to the one the neighboring province of Rivas across the border in Nicaragua had gone through at the turn of the 1 century. A boost in the value of cattle resulted in the consolidation of extensive cattle ranches with only minimal labor requirements. Edelman (1985) has amply documented that the consolidation of these haciendas occurred at the expense of the local subsistence farming population. The expulsion of small farmers from their subsistence plots was exacerbated by the passage of protectionist legislation in 1932 which restricted the importation of Nicaraguan beef. This spurred on an "enclosure movement" and created a reserve of landless laborers. During this period, the Transnational began to recruit from among this pool of
displaced peasants:

...I know from several very good sources that there are hundreds of laborers in Guanacaste and other parts of the Pacific slope in Costa Rica who are only looking for an opportunity to come here and take up work with us (BDA: Pollan to Blair, Sept. 28, 1933).

...Mr. A. Ledesma is to secure about sixty laborers in Guanacaste for woodland work in your division (BDA: Limon manager to Adams, March 26, 1926).

Unfortunately there is no documentation available which permits an accurate estimation of the percentage breakdown of the various regional/ethnic groupings of Latinos entering the Transnational’s labor force in the 1920s and 1930s. In general terms, however, Nicaraguans were the most numerous, followed by Guanacastecans. Through the beginning of World War II, however, Blacks still constituted the majority of the workers in the Bocas Division. By the 1930s, another Latin cohort, Costa Ricans from the Highlands began migrating to the banana zones in large numbers. For example, from 1916 to 1936 the Limon population increased by 49.3 percent whereas that of the Highlands augmented by only 27.7 percent (Taylor 1980:62). The proportion of Latinos in the Limon population rose from 31 percent in 1927 to 73 percent in 1950 (Casey 1979:245). The bulk of the new Latin immigrants, especially those who worked on the banana plantations, were desperately poor, young, unmarried men. In fact, a not insignificant number were either fleeing the law or had been confined to Limon province by the Costa Rican judicial system for punishment of criminal offences. The Sixaola and Talamanca districts of the Bocas Division attracted many of the outlaws and exiles since they were (and still are) the most isolated and inaccessible banana plantations in the country.
The best description of Latin participation in the labor force during this early period is provided by Fallas a native of the Highlands of Costa Rica who was exiled to Limon for his role in the union movement. In the mid-1920s, he was employed on the labor gang of a Nicaraguan contractor. They were assigned to clear a path through virgin jungle for the railroad in the Estrella District just north of the Talamanca District (see Map 3). Most of his fellow workers according to his account were Nicaraguans or Guanacastecans. He makes reference, however, to highlanders and outlaws as well:

Wham wham wham the shovels kept digging into the mud, their handles slippery from our sweat.

"Higher up boys!" the foreman would shout...

And we'd trudge higher up hunched over at the waist from the pain. Soon we'd all be naked to the waist with the sweat flowing in streams stinging our eyes, wetting our pants, dripping off our arms. And so we continued for hours and hours to the point of nausea, with spasms in our legs and horrible splitting aches in our heads.

A heavy suffocating heat would envelope the jungle. Everything was stupidly immobile, as if nature had transformed itself into lead. But we continued sweating over our shovels... wham...wham...wham.....

All of a sudden the sky would darken...a moment later the rain beat down on us and we'd be shoveling an oatmeal-like mud, shivering in the cold. Then the sun would return burning down upon our shoulders... an asphyxiating, hot steam would rise from the earth and once again...it was all suffocation and sweat. And then more rain.

[We drank] the lukewarm swamp water, thick and gloopy, brown from the mud and the residue of rotten sticks.

Hundreds of times a day we would slip over tree trunks falling through into the swamp, petrified that we might land on some horrible serpent. Then all of a sudden, thousands of wasps would swarm out at us; or sometimes it was the hornets, huge black and ferocious; they were especially aggressive bee-lining directly for our faces, converting us into deformed looking, swollen monsters.

Dragging ourselves through the mud up to our thighs we
would finally arrive from work aching all over, the skin on our hands blistered white. We would return like beaten dogs walking without will in silence (Fallas 1978:119-120, 140, 174).

Typically, Fallas (1978:147-152) and two other Latin companions were assigned the most dangerous, tasks of dynamiting boulders out of the railroad’s path. According to his descriptions, most of the Blacks in the region had already established themselves by this time as independent farmers. They were no longer so desperate as to have to submit themselves to the rigors of Company work—and certainly not to the dangerous task of dynamiting.

According to Company documentation, Latinos, especially Guanacastecans were still performing the most undesirable tasks during World War II and through the 1950s. For example, In the 1940s and 1950s, large groups of Guanacastecans and Guaymis (up to 150 at a time) were imported specifically to clear the overgrown cacao orchards of the Sisala District (BDA: Munch to Moore, March 11, 1954). Although the Amerindians worked in squads segregated from the Guanacastecans, it is significant that these two ethnic groups were the only ones willing to perform such an unpleasant, poorly remunerated task. This occupational hierarchy was not limited to the plantation; it extended to the surrounding region. For example, according to a Ministry of Labor inspector, all the woodcutters on a privately owned sawmill on the periphery of the Sisala District in the 1950s were Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans, while all the workers running machinery inside the mill were Latinos from the Highlands. Blacks did not even accept employment at the sawmill since they could earn a better livelihood from their cacao farms.

This occupational/ethnic hierarchy persists today. During my
fieldwork on the Costa Rican side of the Bocas Division, Guanacastecans represented 40 percent of the labor force, followed by Limonenses who accounted for only 14 percent (see Figure 9). Random interviews with workers from Limon revealed that the majority were, in fact, second generation Guanacastecans, i.e., the offspring of Guanacastecan parents who had immigrated to Limon in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, tens of thousands of Guanacastecans came to the Limon region in the 1960s and 1970s when the banana industry was rehabilitated by the introduction of disease resistant varieties (vajery and gran nain). From 1963 to 1973, 41.4 percent of the population growth in Limon was due to immigration by Guanacastecans (Fernandez, Schmidt and Basauri 1977:316).

Guanacastecans, therefore, are the backbone of the Costa Rican banana industry both in the Pacific and in Limon. In fact, Guanacastecan migrants perform agricultural day labor in disproportional numbers all through Costa Rica. Fleeing landlessness, low wages and a harsh dry season, they have become the labor reserve for the entire non-coffee agricultural sector in Costa Rica (see 13.1.1). They emigrate in the peak of their youth to work as day laborers in either the cattle, cacao or banana industries. Many subsequently adopt a semi-migratory lifestyle, alternating between residence in Guanacaste and six month stints in the banana regions. These irregular cycles of employment are encouraged by the banana companies which fire newly arrived laborers before they pass the three month probation period so that they cannot obtain the job tenure benefits accorded to them by Costa Rican labor law. Many Guanacastecans migrate to the banana plantations solely for the duration of the dry season (roughly January through April) when nothing can be grown locally. Most of these migrants have access to
small, family-owned plots of land in Guanacaste. The subsistence economy, consequently subsidizes the Transnational by providing for the reproduction costs of the Guanacastecan labor force.

A racist ideology has emerged legitimizing the exploitation of Guanacastecans as agricultural day laborers. Costa Ricans refer to them as “surplus Nicaraguans [Nicas regalados]” Guanacastecans are distinguished from other Costa Rican Latins by a set of characteristics, including a dark complexion, colloquial expressions, and a regional accent and mannerisms (i.e., drunken howls). The parents of some Guanacastecans are Nicaraguan emigrants, and probably many of the Guanacastecans on the plantation were really Nicaraguans passing as Costa Rican nationals. Despite their strong regionalist ethnic identity, however, they are patriotically Costa Rican. Frequently I heard Guanacastecan workers express homesick feelings and dream aloud of a good “atole” (a roasted corn drink).

In the Bocas Division, most of the Guanacastecan migrant workers are young and view plantation work as a temporary “adventure.” This reduces their interest in union organizing and in struggles for the long term improvement of working and living conditions on the plantation. They return regularly to their home communities for special holidays (especially Easter and Christmas) and spend most of their savings in week long binges. When I would ask them why they had chosen to work on the plantation, some would cite the dramatic wage difference between their home communities and the banana zone. The most common answer, however, was that the “heat problem” had driven them away from Guanacaste: “It’s just too hot over there right now. No way! You just
can't live in Guanacaste [Hay... esto muy caliente avo a horno que ve... no se puede vivir en Guanacaste.]

Another major cohort of Guanacastecans (generally older men and some women as well) have left the banana industry and established themselves as independent farmers on the periphery of the plantation. Once again, this is a function of common sense and the logic of the life cycle: older workers prefer the security of owning a private plot of land, to the uncertainty of wage labor (see 6.1.4). Murillo and Hernandez (1981:115) report that 50 percent of the small, Latin cacao farmers that they interviewed in Limon were of Guanacastecan origin and that most had formerly worked on banana plantations. Significantly, the second largest group (37.5 percent) were Nicaraguans (Ibid).

I witnessed this process of the "peasantization" of Latin laborers during my fieldwork. The entire upper portion of the Sixaola valley (several thousand acres), which had formerly belonged to the Transnational were invaded by some 600 to 800 families of Latins, 20 percent of whom were Guanacastecan, former banana workers (see Figure 11). They are repeating the same pattern initiated by the West Indian labor force in the 1910s and 1920s (see 6.1.4). The number of squatters increased virtually daily during my fieldwork, with several new huts being constructed each week. In fact at least a dozen of the banana workers who I befriended during the initial phase of my fieldwork, had become squatters before I left. As the superintendent of the Sixaola District noted, "This is the hardest zone to keep laborers. You spend all that money to bus them down here and then they just up and leave you to become squatters instead."
12.2 WORLD WAR II AND THE RECRUITMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS

12.2.1 Hondurans

During World War II, the Bocas Division lost the most dynamic sector of its labor force to the Panama Canal where wages were considerably higher (see 6.2.3). At the same time, the Company's demand for heavy labor rose dramatically when it signed a contract to grow abaca with the U.S. Army in 1942 (see 2.2.2). During this period, Amerindians were not yet an important component of the Bocas labor force, and the Company was unwilling to raise wages sufficiently to attract local Latin workers. In 1941, consequently, the Company negotiated with the Panamanian government for permission to import foreign Latin laborers from the neighbouring Central American nations:

We can hardly round up sufficient labor to handle our ships and there are at least 75% oldsters.

The farms are also beginning to suffer as the Government will not permit foreigners to work and the labor we have are mostly old and feeble. The situation is not going to improve, due to the demand and salaries of the Canal zone. ...I suggest that an effort be made to import from two to three hundred men.... The [Panamanian] Government may stress the point that the Company should increase its wage scale and thus attract labor, but our total operating cost as of May 31st was $0.073 per pound [cacao] with market prices only slightly higher. Any wage increase, therefore, will not allow us to even break even....

If we should go into abaca production by the end of the year, it will be almost impossible to find good harvesting men as well as two shifts of Plant men assuming a 20 to 24 hour day.

This is a rather gloomy outlook but in looking ahead for only the next six months, it seems extremely important that some effort should be made to assure us a sufficient labor supply to carry on our operations for the good of not only the Company, but for the province of Bocas del Toro (BDA: Kelley to Munch, June 17, 1941).
On March 31 of 1942 the Panamanian government finally granted the Company permission to import "500 Central Americans" (BDA: Executive resolution #196, March 31, 1942, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Department of Migration). This marked the beginning of a massive influx of Latin Central Americans (primarily Hondurans and Nicaraguans) into the Bocas Division through the early 1950s. It was not until the late 1950s and 1960s that Amerindians began to enter the local labor force in large numbers and replaced Central American foreigners as the cheapest source of labor (see 8.2.2).

Although Nicaraguans represented the largest single national/ethnic group to arrive on the plantation during this period, it was in Honduras that the Company followed the most systematic and expensive labor recruitment strategy. The logistics were undertaken directly by the United Fruit Company's local subsidiary, the Tela Railroad Company (see Map 3), which had a surplus of experienced laborers because of the spread of Panama disease and the shipping crisis of World War II (LaBarge 1959:29). The Company, therefore, selected its best workers and sent them to Bocas. The Honduran government cooperated in exporting its nation's surplus labor to alleviate the depressionary effects of the war:

...when dealing with the government authorities in Tegucigalpa, Harel Medina informed me that all areas he visited were certainly most desolate, and everyone eager for a chance to go to work again. These people are subsisting on a few little milpas and are very much alarmed because their plantings of both chato bananas and plantains are beginning to be affected by Panama Disease and they fear that this will bring utter ruin to their region. If necessary I would be glad to send Harel Medina to explain this situation to the proper authorities, or even better if a representative of the government would like to accompany our party to this region to personally witness their misery, he could not help but truthfully report that offering these people employment would be a blessing for them and to the
country (BDA: Turnbull to Scott, April 21, 1951).

One of the Hondurans (now an independent cacao farmer on abandoned land he seized from the Company) recruited during this period described to me how he was loaded on a ship in La Ceiba along with 800 other workers and transported to the port of Almirante in Bocas del Toro (see map 3). These Hondurans were specifically contracted to work in the abaca fields and were promised a wage three times higher than the one prevailing in La Ceiba. Slightly under one-third of the labor force (some 1,000 people) were involved in abaca operations. Through the 1940s, abaca field work was dominated by Hondurans (and later Nicaraguans). Most Blacks were concentrated in the less strenuous jobs inside the abaca processing plant. Without the presence of the Hondurans (and other foreigners) the Company probably would not have been able to find sufficient laborers willing to work for the wages it was offering in the abaca fields as it was by far the most taxing task in the Division. In 1949 the Panamanian press denounced the fact that only 1,174 out of 3,427 of the employees in the Bocas Division, were Panamanian citizens (La Nacion, Jan. 23, 1949). Foreign laborers continued to enter the Bocas labor force through the early 1950s. For example, in 1951 alone, "...439 laborers, women and children were imported from Honduras... (BDA: Moore to Diebold, Feb. 6, 1952)."

12.2.2 Nicaraguans (and Guanacastecans)

Nicaraguan Latins entered the Bocas labor force in the late 1940s and early 1950s in even larger numbers than Hondurans. In fact, Nicaraguans were so desperate for jobs that, according to one official, "with the Nicaraguans, you hardly even had to recruit them; they came on their own
by foot." Most reached the Costa Rican side of the Bocas Division at their own expense. As there was no road, they had to walk south from Limon through the Talamanca mountains. Most had entered the country on foot illegally through Guanacaste. In 1951, for example, according to a Company report, "291 laborers arrived at Sibacoa at their own expense and were permitted to enter Panama to work for the Company being given Permiso Especifico [Special Permits] (BDA: Myrick to Redmond, Jan. 15, 1952)." The total labor force in the Bocas Division during the late 1940s and early 1950s fluctuated between 2,500 and 3,500; this steady influx of foreign laborers (mostly Nicaraguans, but a considerable number of Guanacastecans as well) was crucial to the operation of the Division, especially since they were willing to perform the most strenuous tasks rejected by the Black population: harvesting abaca, underbrushing cacao, and rehabilitating bananas.

Although most Nicaraguans arrived on their own, the Company also recruited a substantial number directly from Nicaragua and Guanacaste. In the late 1940s an agent was paid $1,000 per month to send Nicaraguan laborers to the Bocas and Armuelles plantations in Panama (BDA: Assorted payment vouchers 1947, 1948). In fact, the Company even arranged for General Somoza (who was in power in Nicaragua) to pressure Panamanian officials to be more lenient in allowing Nicaraguans to enter Panama in order to work on the United Fruit Company's farms:

Both the General [Somoza] and the Coronel [colonel] were so interested [in labor recruitment] that they told Chava that Coronel Remon [president of Panama] and some Panamanian Ministers were due to visit them the following day and that they were going to approach the Panamanian Officials on the matter of allowing Nicaraguans to enter Panama to work for the Company exempt from deposit (BDA: Heck to Diebold, May 30, 1949).
The final agreement for allowing Nicaraguans to enter Bocas del Toro was signed in 1947 by all three governments involved: Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. It specified that only those Nicaraguans who were already illegally inside Costa Rica (mostly in the border province of Guanacaste) could be transported to the Panamanian side of the Bocas Division (BDA: Granados to Sanderson, Dec. 13, 1946; Hamer to Myrick, Jan. 10, 1947). The economic crisis in Nicaragua was so extreme, that in 1946 "...in the province of Guanacaste alone there were 40,000..." desperately looking for employment as agricultural laborers (BDA: "Memorandum For Obtaining Workers for the UFCO," Narvaez, Dec. 10, 1946). Elderly Nicaraguans who were recruited in this fashion in the late 1940s and early 1950s claim that Company agents artificially swelled the ranks of the undocumented Nicaraguan laborers in Costa Rica by arranging for Nicaraguans living in the neighbouring province of Rivas to cross the border into Costa Rica at night. These desperately poor agricultural workers were then flown down to Sixaola from the airports that the Company operated along the Costa Rica/Nicaragua border.

In this manner, from January, 1947 through the early 1950s, a constant stream of Nicaraguans entered Bocas via the land border at the Sixaola bridge (see Map 4). In the month of January, 1947, alone, (when the first agreement with the three governments was signed) 130 Nicaraguan workers were flown from Guanacaste to the Bocas Division, and 187 to the Armuelles Division (BDA: Zuniga, "For Almirante, For Puerto Armuelles," March 27, 1947). By June of 1949 the Company had already built special "camps to take care of 180 Nicaraguan laborers with families and... 120 more on a single basis making a total of 300
laborers (BDA: Diebold to Myrick, June 27, 1949)."

Nicaraguan laborers represented an even more crucial component of the labor force in the Company’s Pacific Coast Divisions in Costa Rica (Golfito and Quepos) and Panama (Armuelles) (see Map 3). I interviewed elderly Nicaraguans in remote rural communities in Rivas province who claimed that Company recruiters used to run radio advertisements on local stations calling for laborers. The next day they would park cattle trucks in the central plaza honking their horns and announcing their imminent departure for the Pacific Coast banana plantations in Panama and Costa Rica. Migration to the Costa Rican and Panamanian banana plantations became such an “institution among young Nicaraguan men in the 1950s that it was rendered into literature by a Nicaraguan author who was a veteran of this labor flow (Quintana 1962). According to Tomas Borge (1980), one of the founders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, there were so many Nicaraguans working on the Costa Rican banana plantations in the late 1950s and 1960s that the Sandinistas sent cadre to the region to organize their fellow countrymen, since repression at home prohibited open political discussion. Jokingly he refers to "...the Costa Rican banana zone--a North American territory inhabited by Nicaraguans and where can be found a few Costa Rican... (Borge 1980:29)."

12.2.3 Chiricanos

By the mid 1950s, the Panamanian government refused to grant the Transnational permission to import additional foreign laborers. Significant numbers of Panamanian laborers from the province of Chiriqui (as well as Kuna and Guaymi Amerindians) had begun entering the labor
force. Chiricanos were the only group of Panamanian Latins willing to work for the Company as day laborers. In the 1930s they did not have to migrate all the way to Bocas to find wage labor employment as they could work on the Company’s newly opened Pacific Coast subsidiary (the Armuelles Division) located in their home province (see Map 3). At that time only a minority was willing to work permanently for wages in the Armuelles Division since they had access to land locally. They would only work for the Transnational during the dry season in between harvests. Company files abound with references to the instability of the Chiricano population. In fact, this instability was the Company’s justification to the government for not complying with Panama’s legal requirement that 75 percent of its laborers be Panamanian nationals:

> It is well known that the West Indians, the Costa Ricans and the Nicaraguans are permanent and stable year round workers. The nationals, however, have always only worked for short periods. The nature of our operations here render it imperative that we be able to count on full-time laborers (BDA: "Memorandum," Blair April 26, 1932).

By the late 1940s, however, the labor market was beginning to change dramatically. Chiricanos were entering the Armuelles labor market in such large numbers that Company officials began channelling excess Chiricanos to Bocas where the shortage of Panamanian nationals had become an acute political problem.

These early Chiricano migrants to Bocas are referred to by elderly Bocatoreños in much the same way as are the Nicaraguan and Guanacastecan immigrants. They are said to have been rough, violent drunkards—the classic characteristics associated with desperately poor landless migrant laborers. An elderly Chiricano complained to me that during his first years in Bocas, “No one liked us Chiricanos. They wouldn’t even
sell us coffee." He had had a difficult time finding someone willing to provide him with food on credit until he received his first paycheck. When pressed on the subject, he admitted that it was a warranted fear, since most of the Chiricanos entering Bocas at the time were "adventurers." In fact the two companions with whom he had crossed the mountains from Chiriqui ran off after their first pay day without honoring their debt at the canteen where they had received food on credit.

At the time of my fieldwork, Chiricanos represented 14 percent of the day labor force in the Bocas Division (see Figure 3). This was by far the largest cohort of Panamanian Latins coming from a single region. Furthermore, a large proportion of the Latin workers born in Bocas are the descendants of Chiricano immigrants (just as many of the Limon workers in the Sixaola District are second generation Guanacastecans). Chiricanos and their descendants, therefore, comprise the bulk of the Latin day laborers on the plantation. Significantly, Latins from Panama City represent less than one percent of the day labor force, and Latins from all of Panama combined (excluding Chiriqui and Bocas) add up to only four percent (see Figure 3).

Chiricanos have been even more upwardly mobile in the Company's occupational hierarchy than Blacks. They predominate in both low level and high level supervisory tasks (see Figure 6 and 8). As Figure 6 illustrates, a disproportionate number of Chiricanos are monthly employees (25 percent) compared to day laborers (14 percent). At the same time they constitute the regional/ethnic group which contributes the highest number of foremen and assistant foremen, followed by Bocas
(which includes many second generation Chiricano descendants). Sixteen out of 22 of the packing plant administrators were Chiricanos; six out of ten of the assistant superintendents; five out of seven of the superintendents; 46 of the 75 tractor drivers; and the second highest official to the North American manager were Chiricanos (see Figure 2). On the State owned farms this pattern was even more dramatic. At COBANA, all employees earning over $500 per month were Chiricanos; as was the head manager, his two assistants, all three assistant administrators and six out of eight of the foremen (see Figure 10).

Nationalism has been crucial to Chiricano upward mobility. What the Black population refers to deprecatingly as the "Latinization" of the Bocas Division is indeed a conscious policy of the United Fruit Company. In response to nationalist pressures from the Panamanian government, Latins have been systematically promoted into middle level management positions. For example, as early as World War II, the Ministry of Labor registered complaints over "discrimination against natives":

Rojas Pardo [of the Ministry of Labor] then launched into a vitriolic attack on the Company about not employing seventy[-]five percent Panamanians in the better class positions; that they were discriminated against in the way of club and housing facilities etc (BDA: Stone to Myrick, Nov. 8, 1940).

The secretary of agriculture and commerce sent the Company a detailed list showing cases of North American employees receiving higher pay than Panamanians for comparable work at the managerial level (BDA: Stone to Myrick, Dec. 11, 1940). The Panamanian press began to publicize this issue and the Company's agent reported "...there should not be any doubt in the mind of anyone that there is a formidable move afoot to obtain equality in salaries, living conditions etc., between Panamanos and

Panamanian nationalism specifically excluded Blacks who were treated as foreigners during World War II (see 7.1.4). Ironically, the descendants of Nicaraguan and Honduran immigrants, on the other hand, have benefitted from Panamanian nationalism since they have become fully assimilated into local society. This nationalism obliges the Company to override objective differences in "labor quality" in determining the promotion of Latin Panamanians to higher positions within the local labor hierarchy; it is a function of political pressure. Chiricanos, who are considered by Company officials to be political trouble makers and of a lower labor quality are forced onto the Transnational by the Panamanian state. This issue of labor quality and political mobilization among the Latin labor force, however, is the subject of the following chapter.

NOTES

1 Already by the 1920s in Guanacaste there were over a dozen landlords possessing a minimum of 10,000 hectares each (Edelman 1985:61.)

2 Sixaola remains a haven for outlaws and ex-offenders even today. Many of the Sixaola District workers have criminal records. The Sixaola farms have a more lenient security clearance than other plantations in Costa Rica. Many of the workers are fleeing child support suits since the Social Welfare Institute (in charge of enforcing the alimony and child support laws in Costa Rica), does not include Sixaola in its registry.

3 The Sixaola cacao orchards following World War II were in particularly bad condition, having become seriously overgrown in the early 1940s when most able bodied laborers were shifted into abaca farm work which was paid better. The elderly Black population who remained in the Sixaola District through World War II refused to "chop bush" for the wages the Company was paying. I was told that poisonous snakes, (especially the redoubted terciopelo) abounded in the shaded cool, humid
undergrowth of the Company's overgrown cacao orchards.

4 Labor for the coffee harvest is obtained locally in the Highlands where the orchards are concentrated. Since coffee picking is remunerated on a piece-rate basis, skilled, experienced pickers can earn well above the minimum wage. Often all the members of a family, including young children participate in the harvest.

5 In the Sixaola District, because of the difficulty in attracting sufficient labor the Company could not hire its workers before they passed the three month probationary period. All banana Companies need a certain minimal percentage (between 50 and 75 percent) of stable workers to perform the tasks that require skill (packing, selecting, pruning etc.). The Company was just beginning to reach this level of labor stability in 1983, towards the end of my fieldwork.

6 By popular vote in 1828, the various sub-regions of Guanacaste seceded from Nicaragua and became part of Costa Rica (Edelman 1985 chapter 2 fn.8).

7 By North American standards a large proportion of Guanacastecans would be considered Black. In fact according to a newspaper report, a random survey of blood types in Guanacaste revealed that the incidence of deformed B chain hemoglobin in the local population was seven percent compared to nine percent among Africans and 2.54 percent for the rest of Costa Rica (La Nacion, April 24, 1978).

8 Of course, some Guanacastecans (and Nicaraguans) have managed to save money during their periods of wage labor on the banana plantations. I spoke with several small grocery store owners in remote villages in Guanacaste (and Nicaragua) who had raised the capital for their business through plantation wage work.

9 The Latin squatters in the Sixaola valley also represented a source of labor for the Company. For example, I interviewed one former squatter working on the plantation who was forced into wage work in order to repay a loan the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture had granted him to plant corn. The market price for corn the year he received the loan was not high enough to cover his expenses. He was forced, consequently, to sell his land and take up permanent employment with the Transnational in order to pay back his debt to the Ministry.

10 I met several descendants of Salvadoran workers who claimed that their fathers had been contracted by the Company via a special negotiation with General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez. I was told that, during World War II, a group of 500 Salvadoran men under the age of 30 were shipped out of the Salvadoran port of Acahutla following a rigorous medical exam. I was unable, however, to find any direct reference to the recruitment of Salvadorean in the Company's archives. These Salvadoreans were probably recruited by the U.S. Army for work on the Panama Canal and then reassigned to the abaca project in Bocas.

11 In 1947 various permits to import smaller numbers of Central Americans were obtained from the Panamanian government. In 1949, an agreement was signed for the importation of "...500 laborers and their
families for agricultural work in the province of Bocas del Toro (BDA: Mais to Diebold, Nov. 1949)." Again in 1951, permission was granted for an additional "...thousand laborers from Honduras and/or Nicaragua to Almirante (BDA: Moore to Myrick, Sept. 4, 1951)."

12

Ironically, many Guatemalans, Salvadoreans and Nicaraguans signed onto the ship as Hondurans in order to qualify for recruitment according to the quota established by the Company's labor contract with the Panamanian and Honduran governments.

13

Many Guanacasteans also reached the Sixaola District on foot in equally desperate economic straits.

14

A "fringe benefit" of this process of importing foreign laborers, was the ability of the Company doctors to screen the workers before approving their passage into Panama. In much the same way as the West Indian immigrants had been "inspected" medically at the turn of the century before being recruited for work on the Panama Canal (see 3.1.2), the Nicaraguans and Hondurans who were introduced into the Bocas Division in the late 1940s, were subjected to minute medical exams. For example:

One of the twelve laborers examined in Sixaola... was rejected because of hernia (BDA: Engler to Diebold, March 22, 1947).

...one of the five laborers arrived in Sixaola... was rejected because of tertiary syphilis, another was treated for gonorrhoea [sic] and approved, the others were accepted (BDA: Engler to Diebold, March 6, 1947).

The poor health conditions of these Nicaraguan immigrants, especially the prevalence of malaria and hernias in the doctor's reports, testifies to the rigors faced by Nicaraguan agricultural laborers during this period.
CHAPTER 13: LABOR CONTROL AND POLITICIZATION

The differential "exploitability" of the various ethnic groups composing the Bocas Division labor force is one of the principle themes of this thesis. This second chapter on Latins compares each Latin ethnic group's "labor quality" and relates it to patterns of political mobilization. Labor quality and politicization are treated by the workers as abstract ethnic character traits, inherent "in the blood" of each "race." This chapter elucidates the structural origins for why, for example, local discourse claimed, "Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans are an angry people of caste with thicker skin who like to work hard [gente brava de cuesta más querían les querían trabajar]."

13.1 LABOR QUALITY

13.1.1 The Best Workers: Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans

As has already been noted, by the 1920s and 1930s, Latins (primarily Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans) began replacing West Indians in the most strenuous, dangerous tasks on the plantation (see 12.1). Nicaragua and the province of Guanacaste took the place of the West Indies as the banana industry's reservoir for inexpensive labor. Since the 1920s, 1 Nicaraguans have been considered the best workers on the plantation. This appreciation extends beyond the plantation context; throughout Costa Rica, Nicaraguans have developed a "longstanding reputation as exemplary workers (Edelman 1984:389)." Wherever wages are lowest and working conditions most unpleasant, Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans prevail. In fact, as was noted in the discussion of the Bribri in the cash economy (4.1.2), it is not uncommon for Amerindian small farmers to
hire Nicaraguans and, to a lesser extent, Guanacastecans to perform the most undesirable tasks on their farms (see 4.2.3).

Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans are willing to work harder than most other ethnic groups because of poverty, unsatisfactory employment alternatives, and the correlation of forces in the class struggle in their region of origin (see 1.2.2). This last factor, is the most interesting as it introduces a dynamic, processual factor into the analysis of the structural roots of differential labor quality; an economicistic explanation is not sufficient. In his historical analysis of labor quality on latifundios in Guanacaste, for example, Edelman (1985:117 ff.) provides a "class struggle analysis." He notes that landlords consider Nicaraguans to be far superior workers to Costans:

...[Nicaraguans] had historically been submitted to more rigorous systems of labor control and were consequently more pliable than native Guanacastecans.

Descriptions of conditions in Nicaragua in the late nineteenth century leave little doubt that the average hacienda laborer there endured a more severe work regime and that a well-socialized Nicaraguan worker was less likely than the average Guanacastecan to be presumptuous about his traditional rights. ...coercive mechanisms were already firmly established, such as agricultural judges who obliged the peon to pay off debts with labor. ...Nicaraguan landowners were in a much stronger position via a via the work force than their Guanacastecan counterparts. ...hours were longer in Nicaragua and hacendados often provided a considerable portion of wages in goods rather than in cash, a practice which would have been unacceptable to the Guanacastecan peons of the pre-1930 period (1985:120-121).

The superintendent of agriculture in the Bocas Division, provided me with virtually the same explanation (if not in scholarly language) for why Nicaraguans are excellent workers:
Much of the problem with Ticos is their government. Their labor code promotes degeneracy ["libertinge"]. Those governments in Nicaragua [Somoza's dictatorship] just don't tolerate the degeneracy we have here.

Of course, the factors contributing to the balance of class power within in any given area are complicated and require careful examination. For example, according to Edelman (1985:128) in Guanacaste, following a series of protective laws for the Costa Rican cattle industry in 1932, landlords introduced wire fencing and initiated an enclosure movement. This was accompanied by the introduction of "a new level of labor discipline" on Guanacastecan cattle haciendas. Nevertheless, the strength of the local landlords and the level of state repression in Costa Rica was never equal to that of Nicaragua. In fact, historically Guanacastecan peasants have successfully annexed land from landlords. They have even sometimes won their legal battles in court (Edelman 1985:258 ff., 204 ff.). Guanacaste, nevertheless, has remained one of the poorest regions of Costa Rica with significantly lower wages than the rest of the country.

This wage differential is crucial today. Newly arrived Guanacastecans on the plantation were elated by the salaries they were receiving on the plantation. For example, a Guanacastecan who was receiving an eight hour minimum wage of 188 colones ($3.76) on the plantation told me incredulously that a week earlier he had been receiving only 75 colones ($1.67) for harder work chopping cattle pastures in his home community. Guanacastecans themselves explain that they "know how to work well" because their homeland is hot and dry. Their descriptions of working conditions in their natal communities--chopping cattle pastures under the hot sun with no shade
for miles around, or cutting sorghum and sugar cane—compare unfavorably
with the hardest tasks on the banana plantation. Non-Guancastecan
banana workers complain that these enthusiastic Guanacastecan immigrants
are depressing the local wage scale: "He thinks he’s so rich because
he’s used to 25 colones a day and here he makes 150...200 and he’s all
excited. But with time he too feels the pinch when he sees it’s not the
same cost of living as Guanacaste."

As in the case of the Guaymi (9.1.3), laborers from regions of
extreme poverty and deprivation allow the Company to save money on
infrastructure costs. Hence Nicaraguans (and to a lesser extent
Guanacastecans) accept hygiene and living conditions intolerable to most
Costa Rican or Panamanian laborers. Not unlike the Guaymi immigrant to
the plantation, barefoot Nicaraguan day laborers have never lived with
electricity, or running water; they do not automatically require their
employers to provide such "luxuries." Living and working conditions
unsatisfactory to the Costa Rican banana worker are considered normal by
6 the Nicaraguan day laborer (cf. Bourgois 1983:108-109). For example, on
a bus heading to Limon I was asked by a Guanacastecan what conditions
were like in Sixaola. When I described the isolation, mediocre living
conditions etc. of the plantation, he interrupted with a note of relief
"Oh that doesn’t bother me I’m from a really ugly community ... far from
the road. I’m used to all that. How much are they paying?"
Significantly when I described these same living conditions to Costa
Ricans from the Highlands their reaction was just the reverse: "God
forbid... I would never work there no matter how much they paid."

13.1.2 Mediocre Workers: Costa Ricans
Non-Guanacastecan Costa Rican Latins in the Bocas Division have a reputation for being mediocre laborers. The alternative sources of income and employment available to them (especially those from the Highlands) renders banana work unattractive. When the Sixaola District was reopened to banana production in the late 1970s, Costa Rican Latins refused to work under the arduous working conditions offered by the Transnational. Although the Company arranged through the Ministry of Labor for bus loads of Costa Ricans to be imported from the Highlands, few remained for more than a few months. According to the manager of the Division, every three months there was a one hundred percent turnover of Costa Rican workers (even the Guanacastecans) on the Sixaola project. Internal correspondence of the Labor Relations Office of the Sixaola District from this period amply documents this:

The people [Costa Rican Latins] who come here in search of work do not like the place because they expect to encounter in this isolated region at least minimal facilities such as: housing, transport, stores. They arrive from far away and they are familiar with other zones in the country. Therefore, when they encounter such difficult living conditions, they chose instead to return to their homes or to search out the banana zones in Guapiles and Rio Frio (SDF: Brenea to Carles, May 13, 1981).

The Company gave up trying to entice Costa Ricans into its Sixaola District labor force and instead illegally imported Guaymi Amerindians into its Sixaola District labor force (see 9.1.7). According to the engineer in charge of the initial infrastructural preparations in Sixaola,

When we opened Sixaola we had to grab ahold of the Panamanian Indians cause they were the only ones on hand because from Limon you couldn’t get one single person. I looked for carpenters in the Highlands [of Costa Rica] but no one wanted to come.... And the prices they were asking! And then they wanted to go home to Cartago every weekend and those kinds of things so we couldn’t get people. I went to
Cartago, San Jose, Limon all over looking for carpenters and workers. Impossible! They're used to working with lots of facilities. And they wanted to be paid as soon as they left from here...until they returned over there...and then another year later at 2,000 pesos the hour... It was just impossible and then they require houses like this and like that. In opening a division in reality you got to use jungle men. People who are capable of knocking down trees and disposed to that kind of life. Nowadays they all expect to arrive at a house with electricity. They want to have the bathroom working. But when we open divisions... its in thatched huts and deep in the jungle with access only by mule or hiking. You have to really be ready to struggle with your bare arms, 'cause there's nothing there. you have to control the rivers, the floods, the bridges, the railroad, with no facilities, without anything. And the Cartagos--as we call the people here (Highlands of Costa Rica)-- are no good. They just can't hold up to anything.

The few Latinos who did remain working in Sixaola in the late 1970s were primarily Guanacastecans, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans.

Another disadvantage of Costa Rican workers from management's perspective is their high level of literacy and their sophistication with respect to their legal rights. For example, merely the fact of knowing that a labor code exists, greatly reduces a worker's exploitability. Costa Rican banana workers have an advanced educational level; I frequently met laborers (even Guanacastecans) who had completed their high school education. Most are able to read the labor code, hire a lawyer, or write a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Labor when their legal rights are abridged. An elderly North American Company official who had worked on almost all of the Company's subsidiaries throughout Latin America told me that the reason Costa Ricans are "such lousy workers" is that "They are too damn educated." Another North American official based in Honduras who overheard this comment, agreed enthusiastically, adding that "his" workers were much better than Costa Ricans because so many of them were illiterate: "You see, what you need
to make a good worker is lots of underdevelopment. That's why Honduras makes such good workers. Just look around the country a little and you'll see why." Already in the 1920s, there was a dramatic contrast between Costa Rican banana workers and those from the less economically developed Central American nations:

Costa Rican peasants are different in habits and attitudes from illiterate mestizo (half-breed) peons, accustomed to the semi-feudal conditions prevailing on Guatemalan fincas, as well as from impoverished Honduran mestizos, accustomed to living upon the meagre diet of corn and beans raised on rugged hillsides (1936:160).

Nevertheless, the living conditions in the Sixaola District where the bulk of the Costa Rican Latins are located on the Bocas Division are by no means adequate. Costa Ricans tolerate housing which would be considered substandard by workers in the industrialized nations. For example, my barrack room was only 2.3 by 3.3 meters in size and I shared it with three workers. In the room next door, a couple with two children and one infant lived under these same cramped conditions. The crowding is even more severe in the larger barracks where kitchens are provided. According to the Minister of Health inspector there were four persons on average per bedroom. In one of these barracks there were 30 people sharing a total floor space of 40 square meters (including the kitchen).

The overcrowding results in overuse of the sanitation facilities. The barracks were originally built to house only single men but families with newborn infants are obliged to live in these inadequate structures. In the barrack where I lived, there were only three toilets and two showers for over thirty people, including three newborn infants, three young children, and two "retired" grandparents. Since the
majority of the rest of the residents were young, single males, several of whom were alcoholics, it was not unusual to find the rest rooms covered with vomit on Sunday mornings. My alarm clock was shattered when rats knocked it off my window sill in the middle of the night. Malnutrition, although exceptional, exists among the children of the banana workers as the following matter-of-fact report from the Labor Relations Office in the Sixaola District illustrates:

On Tuesday, the 28th of the current month, the one and one half year old daughter of a worker in Farm 96 died in the afternoon from suffocation due to parasites (SDF: Labor Relations Report, Week of June 25-July 1, 1983).

Nevertheless, Costa Rican Latinos (with the exception of Guanacastecans) are reputed to be the most demanding workers with respect to living conditions of any other ethnic group. Indeed, conditions in Sixaola are considerably superior to those on the Panamanian side of the Plantation, especially in the housing complexes where the Guaymi are concentrated (see 9.1.3).

13.1.3 The Worst Workers: Panamanians

Panamanians are universally recognized as the worst workers on the plantation. In fact, as early as the 1910s management preferred Costa Ricans to Panamanians. The Bocas manager wrote his homologue in Limon in 1918:

...as very few Panamanians have ever been raised to work. ...I will probably call on you for a good many Costa Ricans in the near future. As there are only a few natives (Latinas) in this district that we can use. As a matter of fact, the few Costa Ricans that we have here are excellent men, and on the whole I think are much better than the Panamanians... (BDA: Kyes to Chittenden, July 23, 1918).

The Company files abound with criticisms of Panamanian labor quality.
These were especially numerous from the 1930s through the 1950s when the Panamanian government was pressuring the Company to hire more Panamanians and less foreigners because of the high rates of unemployment in the Canal Zone (BDA: Blair to Jacome, Sept. 27 1933; La Nacion, Jan. 20, 1951; Panama Tribune, May 27, 1951).

From the Company's perspective, workers from the Canal Zone have always been most unsatisfactory--whether Black or Latin. Canal workers are accustomed to far superior working conditions than the Company is willing to offer, as a report from the Bocas manager to headquarters...
13.2 POLITICAL ORIENTATION

13.2.1 Latin "Susceptibility" to Communism

In contrast to Amerindians and Blacks, Latins are reputed to be "vulnerable to union ideas and communism." Historically, whenever Latins have entered the labor force in large numbers, union movements and strikes have been initiated. For example, during the early 1950s in the Sixaola District a union was formed when the superannuated West Indian cacao work force, was replaced by Latins (primarily Guanacastecans and Nicaraguans). In fact, in 1957, faced with the mounting militancy of its newly unionized labor force the Transnational leased all of its cacao groves in the Sixaola District to former farm administrators and foremen, thereby destroying the union movement before it spread to the Panamanian half of the Division.

The Sixaola District strike of January, 1982 is the most dramatic example of the different levels of politicization between Costa Rican Latins and Amerindians. As was noted in the discussion of Guaymi economic exploitation (see 9.1.7), Amerindian workers were replaced by Latins in the Sixaola District in mid-1981 when it was suddenly cheaper to hire Costa Ricans instead of Panamanian Amerindians due to the devaluation of the Costa Rican currency. A strike erupted a few months after the replacement of the Amerindians by Latins in Sixaola (see Figure 12). According to the union leader who organized the strike, it was a virtually spontaneous movement. The laborers were so dissatisfied with the poor working and living conditions that in two weeks the union organizer signed up over half of the workers for membership in the new
union. He claims that the workers themselves precipitated the strike against his advice.

The strike lasted two months, and was one of the most heavily repressed labor disturbances of the last ten years in Costa Rica. Two hundred members of the Rural Guard were sent to protect the strike breakers that the Company imported en masse. On several occasions the Rural Guard opened fire into protesting crowds of workers and onlookers. According to official reports one striker, Narciso Morales Valdelomar, was killed and two people were wounded, including Morales Valdelomar’s five year old daughter.

The strike was successfully broken by the Company by firing and blacklisting the majority of the work force (75 percent of the 600 workers according to the superintendent of agriculture) and by busing in some 400 replacements. The Rural Guard accompanied by foremen and farm administrators broke down the doors of the striking workers still living in the Company barracks and threw their possessions “off of Company property” into trucks which carted them away. Over 100 workers were jailed and many were severely beaten. In the provincial capital in Limón the family members of the imprisoned strikers seized the cathedral, but the Company and the government refused to compromise.

By the time of my fieldwork, despite the dramatic political mobilization which had occurred during the January strike, there was no significant movement among the workers to reform a militant union in the Siquia District. Many of the strikers became squatters on Company-owned land on the periphery of the plantation and joined a militant national peasant union (FENAC). The economic crisis prevailing in the country
deepened this demobilization: there were few alternatives to banana work and an increasingly large pool of the unemployed throughout Costa Rica was available to the Transnational. The national economic crisis was so severe that for the first time, significant numbers of urban Costaners from the Highlands began migrating to the plantation. On several occasions, Company officials explained to me that “the crisis has helped us a great deal in combatting the reds and stabilizing the workers.” The militant labor movement suffered throughout the country as workers became increasingly chary of jeopardizing their one source of permanent employment.

13.2.2 National Differences in Patterns of Political Mobilization

Although management considers Latins in general to be politically volatile, there are identifiable differences in political orientation among the various Latin national/regional/ethnic subgroups. To a large extent, there is a direct correlation between the tendency of a particular group to mobilize politically and their exploitability. The same factors (poverty and the correlation of forces in the local class struggle) which make workers tolerant of low wages and poor working conditions, also demobilize them politically. There are also, however, more subjective “cultural” factors which contribute to shaping patterns of political mobilization within the various Latin ethnic groups. The best example is provided by comparing Nicaraguans (and also Guanacastecans) to Costa Ricans. Nicaraguans have a reputation for being an angry people (“gente brava”). They are known to be more prone to violence and less susceptible to repressive intimidation than are Costa Ricans (cf. Bourgois 1984:19).
Although labor organizers, management, and the workers themselves treat Nicaraguan combativity as an innate "racial" characteristic, there is a historical, structural basis for this "national character." The history of Nicaragua, is perhaps the most violent of all the Central American nations, replete with civil wars and extended military dictatorships. In contrast to El Salvador, where the oligarchy and the military systematized their repression through paramilitary groups and rural community spies (thereby creating a population known for its polite, cautious style of interpersonal interaction) in Nicaragua, no intelligence networks of equivalent sophistication developed. Instead, a less well-organized (but only slightly less bloody) level of violence and repression has prevailed. The repeated U.S. invasions and the interminable civil wars that have plagued Nicaragua since colonial times have resulted in a more confrontational and violent style of interpersonal relations. During a one week visit to Nicaraguan banana plantations, I witnessed several child beatings, a bitter hair-pulling-eye-gouging-nail-scratching fight between two women, and constant displays of violent bravado among the young men. In contrast during nine months of barracks life in the Sixaola District in Costa Rica I witnessed relatively few incidences of personal violence. This propensity for violence and bravado on the part of Nicaraguans assumes a political dimension, as they are more amenable to confrontational mobilization. For example, the local representative of the Costa Rican peasant union which had organized the invasion of several thousand hectares of Company land on the periphery of the Sixaola District told me that "the Nicas are magnificent for when we have to block the road or need people to shout at the police." An undocumented Nicaraguan
squatther who had been advised by the peasant union’s lawyer to avoid public political activity because of the risk of deportation confided in me, “these Ticos are pussies; they’re scared of everything. They live in misery yet they’re thankful for everything. They just don’t have the balls to defend themselves.”

In contrast to Nicaraguans (and Guanacastecans), Costa Rican Highlanders have a formal, polite style of personal interaction. For example, the formal “you” form (usted) is employed more frequently in Costa Rica than in any other Central American nation. On crowded buses, Costa Ricans will say “excuse me” instead of pushing. An ideological hegemony favoring peace and non-violence prevails. Any disruption of the “national tranquility” is frowned upon even by the poorest, most exploited sectors. Significantly, Costa Rican history, though not devoid of civil war and violence has been considerably less strife-ridden than that of its neighbours. More importantly, the model of political and economic development implemented by the upper classes in Costa Rica has relied less on violent repression than those of Nicaragua or El Salvador.

Although occasionally union leaders in Costa Rica killed, jailed, and beaten by the security forces, the status quo is maintained more by co-option and ideological hegemony than by coercion. The Costa Rican anthropologist, Jacobo Schifter (1982:194-195) has noted that the notion of a democratic status quo is so deeply engrained in Costa Rican consciousness that historians and sociologists have systematically de-emphasized the authoritarian periods of Costa Rican history in favor of the myth of a continuous peaceful democracy. In fact, as early as
1909, Costa Rican scholars were congratulating themselves for their nation’s innate peacefulness: "[We are] A people of peace, an honest, professional people where the law is obeyed and respected and where the revolutions of our neighbours of South and Central America are unknown (Pacheco 1909:8)."

The Costa Rican ideology of “natural peacefulness” assumes an almost xenophobic, racist dynamic. The press often blames major crimes and political confrontations on foreigners—especially Nicaraguans. At the height of the Del Monte workers’ 1982 banana strike, for example, the newspapers ran articles with headlines such as “Destabilizing Acts are Financed Externally.” The president declared that “the strike movements, as well as the terrorist acts which have taken place over the past few 16 months, have foreign financing (La Nación, 19, 1982).” This preoccupation with blaming social strife on foreigners was noted in an editorial comment by Costa Rica’s leading newspaper:

We Costa Ricans love to deceive ourselves. It’s an escape from the ‘sea culpa.’ Thus every time a serious crime occurs, the question immediately arises, ‘How did they speak?’ And it is like heavenly bells to our ears when we hear the answer, ‘They spoke like Colombians, like Nicas, like Gringos, like Cubans or like Salvadorans.’ ‘Ayyyy! Thank God they aren’t Ticos!’ is the exclamation followed by a deep sigh of relief (La Nación June 20, 1981:15A cited in Edelman 1982:126).

Most importantly from a practical political point of view the Costa Rican commitment to “national tranquility” inhibits militant, confrontational political mobilization. This becomes especially apparent when one compares the actions of Nicaraguan expatriate banana workers to those of Costa Ricans since the 1930s. For example, during the 1934 banana strike in Limón, the militancy of the Nicaraguan workers
became a problem for the Costa Rican strike leadership. Arnaldo Ferreto, a Communist Party senator and one of the leaders of the 1934 movement writes in a pamphlet of how he misjudged the "spirit" of the Nicaraguan workers at a rally and accidentally aroused them, almost causing an insurrection:

The compañero Fallas had advised me... to deliver the most vehement possible harangue to agitate the workers who we assumed had a low morale. By the end, I realized that I had been overly fervent in my speech because the people misinterpreted me, thinking that we should take over the region, seize the plazas in Siquirres and Guápiles and the two extremes of the Old Line. I had to give another speech to calm a little the spirits, explaining that we were involved in a strike and not an armed insurrection (Ferreto n.d.:3).

Ferreto (Ibid:4) attributes the fervour of the crowd to the high proportion of Nicaraguans present:

...there was a subjective factor which was pushing us towards violence. At that time a high percentage of the banana workers were Nicaraguans and many had had military experience; some in the civil wars between liberals and conservatives; others as soldiers or even officers in the Sandinista army. A majority of those who raised their machetes to demand that we take over the main villages in the zone were Nicaraguans, and among them were many veterans of the Sandinista struggle.

Almost 50 years later, I heard Nicaraguan expatriates complaining that the reason the 1982 Sixaola strike had failed was because "the damn Tico leadership wouldn't give us guns."

13.2.3 Regional Differences in Patterns of Political Mobilization

There are also differences in patterns of political mobilization along more locally-based regional distinctions. For example, the superintendent of the Sixaola District who was responsible for importing some 400 strike breakers in early 1982 from four different provinces of
Costa Rica, told me that he had made a mistake in his recruitment. "Had we brought down Guanacastecans to begin with, even though the transport costs are higher we would have saved money. None of the San Carlenos, the Cartagos, or even those from Turrialba stayed." I interviewed several Guanacastecan who ridiculed the strike breakers from the other regions of the country for "letting themselves get scared away" by the strikers.

Some regions of Costa Rica have been categorically "blacklisted" by management as "red zones." For example, people born in Puntarenas province are routinely refused employment on the assumption that they have been "infected by union ideas." Similarly, workers with experience in the banana industry, are also automatically refused employment no matter where they are from. In fact, on several occasions during my fieldwork workers were fired after having worked for several weeks when it was discovered that they had previously been employed in another banana zone.

Of all the regional/ethnic groups on the Bocas Plantation, the Chiricano have the strongest reputation for being communists and labor union organizers. Company officials told me that it was part of the personality of Chiricanos to be, mean, vicious, anti-American and "communistic": "Chiriqui province is the base of communism for Panama. All the people trained by the Russians are from Chiriqui." Workers confirmed this stereotype, repeating the phrase: "Chiricanos like to strike, Indians like to work." In the early 1960s and again in the early 1970s, in response to the rising union movement in Bocas, the Company began denying employment to "cedulis fours." This is the
nickname for persons born in Chiriqui because the province's identity card begins with the number four.

Although it is illegal according to the Panamanian labor code to discriminate against workers because of their region of origin, Company officials purposefully broadcast the fact that Chiricanos were blacklisted in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a way of discouraging people from adopting political attitudes similar to those of the Chiricanos, who supposedly were the backbone of the militant faction of the union movement. The Company has promoted the stereotype that Chiricanos came to Bocas merely to become union leaders and foment trouble. During my fieldwork, management also publicized the fact that it was reducing operations on its subsidiary in Chiriqui province (the Armuelles Division) because of the "intransigence of the Chiricano union."

The strategy of isolating Chiricanos as "communist trouble makers," has been largely successful. Many workers in Bocas feel that the Chiricanos have jeopardized their job security by introducing "outside ideologies" into the labor movement. When the Transnational fires a worker for being a red union supporter, the blame is levelled on the union organizer for "provoking" the firing. Repeatedly I was told that, "The red union might be good; the problem is that it gets you fired." I was almost never told that the Company had broken the law or committed an injustice by releasing a worker for his/her political orientation.

13.3 THE ADVANTAGE OF FOREIGNERS

13.3.1 Deportation
Another major disadvantage with Chiricanos from management's perspective is the fact that they are Panamanian nationals protected by Panamanian law. Foreign workers, on the other hand can be deported or intimidated into submission when they become involved in labor movements. The massive deportation of Hondurans in the 1940s is a good example of this. Most of the Honduran laborers had previously worked on the Transnational’s subsidiary in their home country. When confronted with the underdeveloped infrastructure in Bocas, they staged strikes and work stoppages. In a retrospective analysis, the Company concluded that the "...importation of labor from Honduras has been most unsuccessful..." and advised that "...arrangements be made to screen any new men that we might be authorized to import to the extent that they would be acceptable to ...management (BDA: Moore to Mais, Sept. 21, 1954)." The confrontations with Honduran strikers were tense:

...about two hundred closed in on Farm Eight headquarters demanding higher contract rates in the various abaca farm operations.

...the main group from Filipina farm, stopped all others on this farm from working and destroyed some pack saddles that had been made ready for work. They then moved in a body on Luzon Farm to threaten workers there, but were intercepted by police who disarmed them and brought them all to the Bocas del Toro Cuartel jail (BDA: Myrick to Aycock, Dec. 7, 1946).

Today one hundred strikers entered Luzon farm threatening the workers with machetes and destroying the stalks that had been cut. In Filipina Farm they threatened and destroyed... (BDA: Thomas to Diebold, Dec. 5, 1946.

In 1951 alone, 208 Hondurans or 46 percent of those imported that year, "...had to be repatriated... because they were, for one reason or another, unsuited for work in Almirante (BDA: Moore to Diebold, Feb. 6, 1952)."
Elderly Honduran workers claim that whenever they protested low wages or staged work stoppages, the Company would pay a few trusted foremen to cut down several acres of abaca at night and then demand that the immigration authorities repatriate the "culprits." In the post-World War II period hundreds of workers (mostly Nicaraguans and Hondurans) were deported from Bocas for union organizing, or merely for complaining about working conditions. Between July 1958 and June 1959, for example, 340 workers were repatriated; 39 percent were Nicaraguans and 23 percent were Hondurans (BDA: List of Repatriations by Nationality June 30, 1959). Although Nicaraguans were repatriated in larger absolute numbers, Hondurans were deported at a higher per capita rate:

Because of labor unrest amongst the Honduran Abaca Cutters, we are now obliged to repatriate a group of the ringleaders of which twelve are now in jail awaiting repatriation (BDA: Myrick to Aycock, Dec. 7, 1946).

This strategy of deporting foreigners on a massive scale during strikes was characteristic of all the Transnational's subsidiaries throughout Central America. In the Limon Division, for example, hundreds of Nicaraguans were deported during the 1934 strike. Some of these deportees had lived in Costa Rica for over 25 years and had established legal residence. In fact, during the 1934 strike management promoted a xenophobic propaganda campaign in the newspapers, exaggerating the role of foreigners in the movement:

It is urgent now to persecute all foreign elements upon whom has fallen even the slightest suspicion of having taken part in the revolutionary plot that has been incubating among the Costa Rican communoids ['comunizantes'] ... who are constituted primarily by a few kikes ['Polacos'] (Defensa Nacional, Oct. 13, 1934:3; see also La Tribu, Sept. 12, 14, and Oct. 2, 1934:1,5,1; La Hora, Sept. 14, 1934:1,3; La Prensa Libre, Sept. 19, 1934:1,4: El Heraldo, Sept. 13, 1934:4 cited in Sibaja 1983: Appendix 2).
The Nicaraguan consul in Limon "recommend[ed] his compatriots to abstain from participating in subversive acts in the Atlantic zone," threatening them with "ignominy, expulsion, and perhaps even death" should they join the strikers (Voz del Atlantico, Sept. 15, 1934:1). As was noted in the discussion of the political restraints placed on workers of West Indian descent during the 1934 Limon strike (see 7.2.1), the local newspapers repeatedly reminded them of their vulnerability to deportation:

Our local police authorities are busily engaged rounding up all aliens who participated in any of the subversive acts, which took place during the recent strike movement, in different districts of the Zone.

The Government has decided to immediately expel them all from the country.

We also understand that a census has been ordered and is now being taken, on farms in the Atlantic Zone (The Voice of the Atlantic, Sept. 8, 1934:4).

Newspaper editorials advised Costa Rican strikers to recant and "...wake up to their error at having accompanied these [foreign] elements, who are fomenting depredation... in our fatherland which offers them such hospitality (Voz del Atlantico, Sept. 15, 1934)."

Public opinion became so incensed against the alleged "Nicaraguan strike leaders" in 1934 that the Communist Party newspaper (Trabajo, August 24, 1934), was compelled to publish a rebuttal entitled, "The Control of the Strike Movement Continues in Our Hands." The communist newspaper denounced the "...exploitation of a stupid animosity which the ruling class of Costa Rica has fomented against the Nicaraguans and the presentation of the Atlantic strike movement as an adventure of 'bellicose Nicaps' (Ibid)."

Similarly, the massive deportation of Nicaraguan laborers was a
regular feature of the many strikes on the Costa Rican Pacific Coast plantations during the 1950s (Relato de un Viejo Liniero del Atlantico n.d.:12). In Bocas the single largest scale deportation of foreigners occurred during the 1960 strike (see 10.1.2). Hundreds of foreigners (mostly Nicaraguans) were summarily flown back to their countries of origin merely for showing sympathy towards the strike movement. A Chiricano union leader from that period, told me that foreigners were the hardest workers to organize for this reason. Even foreigners only passively involved in the union movement were deported. For example, the fiancee of a well known union activist was targeted:

Since this [union] meeting took place in the barrack room of the canteen operator, Juana Caldera, I suggest that the necessary measures be taken with the Competent Authorities to have her Special Permit revoked and to have her subsequently deported. She is a Nicaraguan and has been operating the canteen since the abaca days.

Copeland lives with her and it is rumored that soon they will be married so that she can obtain her papers as a Panamanian resident (BDA: Smith to Cantrell, Jan. 9, 1961).

During my fieldwork, foreign workers in Bocas continued to fear arbitrary deportation merely on suspicion of union sympathy. In the 1982 Sixaola District strike (on the Costa Rican side of the Bocas Division), the Company expelled every single foreigner (mostly Panamanians) within the first week, regardless of whether or not they supported the strike (La Nacion, Jan. 21, 1982:8). Ironically, even Costa Ricans were "deported" from the Sixaola District. For example, a court ordered the leader of the strike movement never to return to the municipality of Talamanca. Three other leaders were ordered by the same judge "...to return to their home villages in Guanacaste and never, under any pretext return to this province [Limon]" (SDF: Carranza to
Rural Guard, Jan. 16, 1982)." Similarly, as happened during the 1934 Limon Division strike, the Costa Rican press ran articles and editorials emphasizing the predominance of foreigners in the Sixaola strike movement (La Nacion, Jan. 22:14, Jan. 19:8, 1982; La Prensa Libre, Feb. 15, 1982:17).

As was noted in the discussion of the political constraints faced by Black laborers in the 1940s, even during periods of labor tranquility, foreigners are under pressure to maintain good relations with their employers since they often depend on them to intercede in their favor before immigration authorities (see 7.2.1). This was especially the case for the hundreds of Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans who were working semi-legally on the Panamanian side of the Bocas Division in the 1950s:

During the year 1951, 291 Central Americans came via Sixaola. These laborers appear at Sixaola and get permission from the frontier authorities to come into Panama for a few days. Once in the country they find themselves a job, and we secure a Special Permit for them to remain in the country while working for the Company (BDA: Bocas manager to Moore, Feb. 25, 1952).

Although foreigners represented only three percent of the day labor force during my fieldwork (see Figure 3), their dependent relationship on the Company persisted. For example, in October 1982 when Costa Rican immigration officials were pressuring the Company to maintain itself within the legal limit of 10 percent foreign employees in the Sixaola District, the head of labor relations for the Bocas Division sent a handwritten note to the Sixaola District labor relations supervisor asking "Which ones [of the foreigners] is it worth it for the Company to take measures with the authorities to retain (SDF: Carles to Zeledon, Oct. n.d., 1982)?"
13.3.2 Political Refugees

Another important factor which prevents many of the Central American foreign workers in the banana industry from becoming involved in the labor movement, is the political convulsions of their natal lands. Many of the foreign banana workers in both Costa Rica and Panama have been forced to emigrate from their home countries because of political violence and indiscriminate repression. This is especially the case for Nicaraguans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Nicaragua has been consistently plagued by politically motivated strife. In the 1920s and 1930s it was convulsed by a prolonged guerrilla war against U.S. troops led by General Augusto Cesar Sandino. Following Sandino’s assassination, the country was subjected for 45 years to one of Latin America’s most repressive dictatorships. In 1979 this dictatorship was overthrown following a violent revolutionary struggle costing some 40,000 lives. Once again today, Nicaragua is in the throes of an even more destructive civil war fomented by the United States. The political situation in El Salvador has been equally violent. For example, in 1932, at the same time that Sandino’s guerrilla army in Nicaragua was battling North American marines, a violent peasant rebellion erupted in El Salvador. In the repressión following the abortive uprising between 18,000 and 30,000 persons were killed in a matter of weeks. Today, El Salvador continues to be convulsed by guerrilla warfare and state repression.

Consequently, as early as the 1910s, and escalating through the 1930s, many of the Nicaraguans and the Salvadorans emigrating to United Fruit Company plantations in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama were fleeing political persecution. These immigrants did not dare involve
themselves in activities which might lead to their deportation since they risked death or imprisonment in their natal countries. This was the case for example, for the Nicaraguan workers in the Limon Division during the 1930s. Many were former soldiers in General Sandino's guerrilla army who had fled the country when he was assassinated. According to a Costa Rican leader of the 1934 strike:

Those people [political refugees] were really appreciated by the Company. Because there was no strong legislation nor control, the Company could just obtain a special permission for them to stay in Costa Rica so long as they were employed by them. So they had to work for a lower salary without daring to get involved in protest movements for fear of being deported to Nicaragua. Since they were people fleeing the dictatorship there. That made them relatively seek. A lot of them were Sandinistas or deserters from the National Guard. What happened in 1934 was that they had accumulated too much anger and that's why they exploded more than anyone else.

Even those workers who had no political antecedents at home were in danger should they be deported for "subversive activities." A 1931 pamphlet circulated on the United Fruit Company's plantations in Panama denounced excessive abuse of political exiles:

The Company will not be able to find Panamanian workers able to compete with the urgent necessities of exiled workers from Latin America. The fact that they are exiles or expatriates and that they have arrived without papers, defenseless in the clutches of the United Fruit Company requires them to remain in the Company's concentration camps... (Solano 1931:12).

During my fieldwork, political turmoil continued to contribute towards providing the Transnational with a hard working, docile labor force. In fact, in October of 1980 the Company negotiated with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees over the possibility of employing 150 Salvadoran refugees in the Sixaola District (MLF: 21 Agreement Signed Between Cederberg and Castaneda, Oct. 1980). Although
Salvadorans never migrated to the Bocas Division in large numbers, Nicaraguans did. In fact, the turmoil in Nicaragua has been so intense for so many years, that there are Nicaraguan refugees of diametrically opposed political orientations (both somocistas and sandinistas) on the Bocas plantation. There are even Guanacasatecans on the plantation who have to flee their home communities along the border because of the overflow of violence from Nicaragua.

13.3.3 Internal Divisions

Another advantage to the Transnational of maintaining a high proportion of foreigners within its labor force is the internal divisions national diversity foments. Nationalist and regionalist rivalries between Latin groups have historically fragmented worker solidarity and have focused frustrations and angers into apolitical channels. This is not to imply, however that the Company necessarily actively foments these nationalist antagonisms. As in the case of racism between Blacks, Latinas and Amerindians, national/regional chauvinism would exist independently of the Company’s machinations (see 1.2.3).

These antagonisms were especially prevalent from World War II through the early 1950s when the Bocas Division was—as a Honduran worker described it to me—“a pot-pourri of nations [un sancocho de pueblos].” The deepest tension was between Hondurans and Nicaraguans who were constantly fighting. I was told numerous tales of violent Saturday night brawls between Honduran and Nicaraguan workers that ended in bloodshed and. These accounts have assumed almost legendary significance. Elderly Hondurans would tell me of ferocious machete
duels between Honduran and Nicaraguan men which began incidentally over a passing insult. Typically, when a Honduran relates the tale it ends with a gravely wounded Honduran overcoming his Nicaraguan opponent and parting his head in two or chopping it off with one swing of his machete. When a Nicaraguan is the narrator, the version is virtually identical except that it is the wounded Nicaraguan who emerges alive after killing his Honduran opponent.

National chauvinism permeated the frequent labor stoppages of the 1940s and 1950s. Honduran informants repeatedly told me that during their protests over labor conditions, neither the Nicaraguans nor the Blacks would support them: "We were pure Hondurans in that strike.... We were always the most combative. No no the Nicas never stood by us."

These divisions dominated even the most politicized strike movements. For example one of the primary demands proposed by the primarily Chiricano and Bocatoran leadership of the 1960 Bocas Division strike was the "injustice" of being bossed by Honduran or Nicaraguan foremen. This preoccupation with the nationality of one's immediate supervisor remains a subject of frequent conversation and complaint among banana workers. It plays an important role in defusing the class content of worker demands by channeling the contradictions between labor and management into a nationalist chauvinist framework devoid of class content.

13.3.4 Deference to the United States

Nationalism has not always been demobilizing, however. During specific historical conjunctures nationalist sentiment has served to promote solidarity in action. Precisely because it cuts across class lines, it is a sentiment shared, to a lesser or greater extent, by
everyone born in the same country. Consequently, even wealthy Panamanians in the capital who have never even seen a banana plantation have on occasion mobilized in support of banana workers when their plight is framed in terms of the "abuse of children of the fatherland (hijos de la patria)" by "rapacious foreigners." During the work stoppages of the 1940s, the sense of being foreigners in a foreign land helped the Honduran abaca harvesters maintain a unity of action—at least within their own ranks. Nationalism in the 1960 strike, to a large extent enabled Latin and Black Panamanians to overcome their racism and to operate cohesively in opposition to the "gringos." On several occasions, I heard foremen and even middle level administrative personnel complain in nationalist terms of the "lack of heart" of the "gringo" owners of the Transnational. During the Sixaola District strike in 1982, several administrative level employees joined the workers, expressing their dissatisfaction with management in nationalist terms. According to a Company management employee in the 1920s, the Transnational was aware of the danger of nationalism among its administrative level workers:

...in Costa Rica it was the company's policy to avoid as much as possible putting nationals in high positions, because of their divided allegiance in disputes with national governments (Kepner 1936:176-177).

The Transnational has largely resolved the contradiction of interests between profits and patriotism among its management level employees by systematically destroying their nationalist sentiments. An entire cohort of U.S.-educated, anglophone Latins has been trained to fill local managerial positions on United Fruit Company subsidiaries. The dependency literature refers to these "de-nationalized" individuals as
the *comprador* class or the *lumpenbourgeoisie* (Frank 1972). In fact, to a certain extent, the de-nationalization of Latin managers is a parallel ideological phenomenon to internalized racism among Blacks and Amerindians (see 7.2.3, 9.2.5).

The Transnational has promoted an internally racist culture of Latins who have become foreigners in their own country. For example, in the Bocas Division, the superintendent of agriculture is a Panamanian-born Latin raised on the plantation. He attended the Company’s “American school” beginning in the first grade and later won a Company scholarship to a United States college where he eventually completed a graduate degree. Since primary school, he has celebrated only North American holidays, played North American sports (golf, tennis, and bowling), and learned North American history. He has always sung the United States national anthem on the fourth of July, and has carved pumpkins for Halloween. His English is flawless, punctuated by the appropriate slang and mannerisms. When I left the plantation he was engaged to a North American school teacher who did not speak any Spanish despite the two years she had spent at the American School in Bocas.

These Latin administrative level employees have been forced to place the interests of the North American transnational corporation above those of their own country. They denigrate their own national culture. Indeed, if they do not subscribe to the superiority of the United States, they will be fired for being untrustworthy. Workers often refer with disgust to their compatriots in management positions as being “More gringo than the gringos” (Camaro 1982:104).” Economist Frank LaBarge (1959:213-214) on the basis of visits to United Fruit plantations in all
the Central American nations notes:

In the absence of a middle class the Latin American employees tend to identify themselves with the North Americans who are their immediate associates. Many will even say, 'we are Americans too,' not in the usual sense that they too are people of the Western Hemisphere but in the sense that they too are North Americans. This group studies English assiduously, for English is regarded as the language of prestige and authority. In extreme cases a Latin American employee may be insulted if one who knows English persists in addressing him in Spanish. ...As one mother angrily told a schoolteacher: 'My son's name is Joe, not Jose!'

The fetishization of North American culture is so extreme, that on several occasions I saw North American supervisors express openly racist sentiments towards Latina culture in front of Latin colleagues who showed no evidence of being insulted.

Internalized racism and obsequiousness towards North Americans is most pronounced among management level Latin employees, but it also exists among working class Latinas and contributes to a sense of resignation and political demobilization. For example, a banana worker introduced me to his dark skinned daughter saying, "She looks like a chola but she is really very nice." A Guanacastecan worker asked me "Is it true that North Americans are the first in the world for intelligence?" Another Guanacastecan told me "We are just a disorganized people with bad habits; we need more influence from people like you." I was frequently personally embarrassed when workers approached by workers who would proudly assert with no provocation whatsoever that they loved Americans. One elderly, impoverished Chiricano who had lost his youth and his health working for below subsistence wages for the Transnational was especially unflagging in his adulation:
I love the gringos. They give us life... Oh yes the gringos have really helped us out. The gringos are never bad with anyone.

In Costa Rica the internalization of the superiority of North America and of white supremacy values in general has emerged as a national ideology, which is referred to in the scholarly literature as the "white legend" (cf. Creedman 1977:x cited in Edelman 1982:unn.). Costa Rican Latinos, regardless of their skin complexion, call themselves "Whites" even though by North American standards they would be considered "brown," or even Black. The racist image of an "ethnically homogenous, white Costa Rica" has been repeatedly reproduced in scholarly and popular literature (cf. Waibel 1939:528, Sancho 1982[1935]). Violence, radical politics, and revolutionary movements are often treated by scholars, and by Costa Ricans--and even by foreign scholars--as the actions of the "more mestizoized racial stock" of the less cultured brown and black skinned peoples predominating in the neighbouring countries.

NOTES

1 Many workers and management officials claim that Salvadorans are even better laborers than Nicaraguans. The number of Salvadorans in the Bocas Division labor force, however, has never been big enough to warrant a systematic discussion of them as an ethnic group. It is only logical, however, that Salvadorans should make excellent day laborers given the widespread misery in their country and its prolonged history of political violence and repression. Salvadorans, for example, never publicly criticize their foremen or the Company. They are generally extremely polite and cautious. If asked too many questions, they usually answer non-committally and bid leave at the first possibility (cf. Bourgois 1984: 18-19).

2 The Bribri Reservation may be one of the few places in the world where Amerindians can be heard praising, in a patronizing tone, the diligent work habits of their Latin employees. In an ironic
illustration of the "fickleness of ethnicity," a Nicaraguan landless Latin immigrant who was employed full-time by a Bribri farmer confided in me that he too was probably a "pure blooded Indian" but that the people in his community (Ometepe island in Rivas) had lost their indigenous language and customs.

No sharp differentiation is drawn in Bocas between Guanacastecans and Nicaraguans; the two groups are generally lumped together by management and characterized as the best workers. When pressed for details, however, Company officials will admit that there is a difference between Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans but it is a subtle one: "The Guanacastecan is like the Nica he works hard—at least at first. Their problem is that they get infected by communism and laziness more easily."

In a footnote Edelman (1985: chapter 3 fn.40) elaborates on the role "value systems" play in determining labor quality. He notes that Nicoyans, a sub-regional grouping of Guanacastecans who have retained a more Amerindian identity than other Guanacastecans are considered locally to be almost as good workers as Nicaraguans.

Ironically Guanacastecans in their home communities complain that Nicaraguans deflate their local wage structure. For example, Edelman (1985:42) notes that haciendas in Guanacaste close to the Nicaragua border have distinctly more rigorous working conditions than those in the rest of the province:

...the proximity of Nicaraguan and the presence of a small but continual flow of Nicaraguan migrants accustomed to working under such terms made this [more strenuous] labor regime feasible in the border area.

I visited banana plantations in Nicaragua in July of 1983 and confirmed that wages and living conditions are considerably lower despite the extensive improvements introduced since the overthrow of Somoza and the nationalization of the banana industry. The Nicaraguan banana workers were earning only 32 cordobas for five hours of work ($1.15 at the official exchange rate or $0.40 at the Black market rate), their housing is marginal and their access to running water infrequent. Many (if not most) of the young children had distended bellies, a virtually non-existent sight on the Costa Rican and Panamanian banana plantations. Hygiene is so poor that during the week I spent on the Nicaraguan plantation I contracted parasites, whereas during the nine months that I lived in the workers' barracks in the Sixaola District in Costa Rica, I stayed relatively healthy. Finally, most of the Nicaraguan banana workers go to the fields in barefoot. In the Bocas Division, with the exception of the most recently arrived Guaymi workers, everyone is able to afford at least a pair of rubber boots. Most extraordinarily, conditions in Nicaragua had previously been even worse. Most of the workers praised the new Sandinista government for the extensive improvements provided since the revolution.

In the late 1970s, the Company obtained government permission to import 300 Guaymi Amerindians daily into the Sixaola District. In fact, however, far larger numbers were imported (MLF: Castaneda to Ministry of Labor, Dec. 6, 1979; Stancari to Gomez, Dec. 26, 1979). The
Transnational's subcontractor in Sixaola arranged for the Company to change dollars for the Ministry of Labor inspectors at below the market rate in order to prevent an investigation into these immigration practices: "I had those guys in my pocket; they were all my good friends." In the Company files I found reference to a low level immigration official being granted a "soft job" in return for his cooperation in letting Guaymi cross the Sixaola bridge into Costa Rica (SDF: Sixaola District Labor Relations Office to Changuinola headquarters, July 7, 1981). The Division manager told me that Costa Rican officials had "winked" in the enforcement of the quotas on foreign employees in the Sixaola District during the late 1970s.

Ironically many Company officials attribute the tendency of Latin workers to mobilize politically in favor of their economic interests, to their "cultural superiority" and to their higher levels of education. A foreman told me that more Latinas than Guaymi are communist "because they are smarter."

The principle founders of the Sixaola Cacao Workers' Union in 1954 were former banana workers from the Company's Pacific Coast divisions in Puntarenas province. They had been blacklisted by the Transnational in the Pacific, but managed to find employment in Sixaola. During this period the Sixaola District was so marginal that the Company did not even bother to consult its blacklist before hiring new workers. The District developed a reputation in the 1950s, (and even still in the 1980s during my fieldwork) as "such an ugly place to work, that they'll even hire reds."

According to one eyewitness,

That wasn't a strike. It was a war against the workers. Three hundred guards came with their backpacks, grenades, masks and guns. It would be better to call it a stampede ["cabeleada"] against the workers. They chased after us like animals. I never had no schooling so I just don't have the words to explain how horrible it was.

Significantly, even the superintendent of agriculture and the head of labor relations admitted to me that the Rural Guard had "acted roughly [retieron mano dura]" against the strikers.

The Transnational has a special arrangement with the Costa Rican Ministry of Security whereby local subsidiaries pay for the upkeep and the transport of security forces when they are deployed to protect strike breakers. The superintendent of the Sixaola District told me that every morning he and the colonel in charge of the rural guardsmen would discuss strategy for the coming day.

According to eyewitness accounts, just prior to being hit, Morales picked up his daughter to protect her. The same bullet that killed him, wounded her in the knee. For the numerous press accounts of the strike see: La Libertad, Jan. 22-28:3, Feb. 12-18:5, Feb. 19-25:1, Feb. 26-March:4, 1982; La Nacion, Jan. 21:8, 22:6, 1982; and La Prensa Libre, Feb. 2:4, 10:4, 11:9, 15:17, 1982). A rumor was circulating during my fieldwork that several additional workers (up to 25 according to some accounts) were killed by the Rural Guard. This was never confirmed publicly, although cadavers were uncovered in drainage ditches and
several workers disappeared.

13
The director of the jail placed the strikers in the cell for common criminals and announced that the newly arrived prisoners were communists with whom the inmates could have free reign. The criminals thereupon beat up the strikers, raping some of them, and stealing all of their possessions. One of these imprisoned strikers (a Nicaraguan immigrant) told me of how he had to walk all the way back to the plantation in barefeet and without a shirt, having lost everything in the Limon jail.

14
Ironically many of the former strikers underwent an ideological transformation once they obtained land as squatters. Halfway through my fieldwork the governor of Limon announced that squatting's usufruct land rights would be respected in the Sixmaola valley. Subsequently local membership in the FENAC plummeted. According to a FENAC organizer, this is a general pattern to land takeovers. As soon as the state ceases repressing them, the newly constituted small property owners become anti-communist. A drunk squatter who was celebrating the governor's announcement told me,

Now that we got the land we can get rid of the communists. Reds are good for getting you the land 'cause they fight. But now it's better if they leave 'cause they just attract problems.

15
A good example of the "human face of repression" in Costa Rica is the case of a squatter woman who screamed that she was pregnant and losing her baby just as the Rural Guard was about to evict her from her hut on Company land. The rural guardmen immediately called an ambulance from Limon four hours away by dirt road. When the ambulance finally arrived, the woman admitted that she was not even pregnant.

The contradictory nature of the Costa Rican model of repression-with-reform is further illustrated by the case of a union leader who was fired by the Transnational and subsequently jailed and beaten by the security forces for leading a strike in 1982. When I met him six months later he had been unable to find another job because of blacklisting and was subsisting on the food allowance provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare to family members of the unemployed.

16
During my fieldwork there were a series of drug related murders in the squatter settlements surrounding the plantation. Several Costa Rican workers told me they had quit their jobs and were leaving because "there are too many Nicaraguans around here killing people."

17
Most of the Communist Party leadership positions in Bocas are, indeed, held by Chiricanos. Similarly, the bulk of the independent union leadership is also Chiricano. At the same time, however, a disproportional number of the middle and low level management positions on the plantation are held by Chiricanos (see figures 3 and 5).

18
I was able to find specific reference in the Company files to cases of sabotage leading to large scale deportations during the early 1950s:

The local authorities, who were not too perturbed over the work stoppage, took prompt and drastic actions when this sabotage was reported to them.
The local authorities also, partially because of the damage done, declared the work stoppage an illegal strike and cancelled the work contracts of all 48 men involved (BDA: Munch to Moore, July 28, 1953).

In this particular case, the manager even admitted that,...there is absolutely no way of proving the fact...that the men who actually chopped the bananas down on the nights of July 3 and 4 were included in the group arrested.

Matters of this sort are always difficult to handle and while I regret any injustices which may have been done to any of the laborers involved as a result of the action taken; (however) I am highly pleased that we were able to prevail upon the local authorities to act as they did (BDA: Ibid).

19

For example, the second hand man of Fallas, the leader of the strike was a Nicaraguan nicknamed "shot through [Tirases]" because he had been shot through by a U.S. machine gun, while an officer in General Sandino's army.

20

Most Salvadoran emigrants work in the Transnational's Honduran subsidiaries in Tela and La Ceiba. In 1934, out of 4,928 laborers on the Tela Railroad Company plantations in Honduras, 1,072 were Salvadorans (Posas 1981:46).

21

The United Nations officials terminated the negotiations when they visited Sixaola and saw the unsatisfactory living and working conditions. They were also concerned about the Company's contractor for the Sixaola project who had a reputation for illegal activity and poor labor relations (see 9.1.7).

22

According to a Costa Rican Ministry of Labor official, in December 1983, many of the anti-sandinista fighters based in Costa Rica were working temporarily as banana workers in the Standard Fruit Company and Del Monte plantations in the North in between offensives.

23

By the 1960s virtually all the second and third generation West Indian immigrants had obtained Panamanian citizenship.

24

For a creative discussion of the "North Americanization" of Latin American United Fruit Company officials see Camacho (1982).
PART VII CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 14: HOW IMPORTANT IS ETHNICITY?
CHAPTER 14: HOW IMPORTANT IS ETHNICITY?

In the Introduction I resolved to transcend the class versus ethnicity impasse. After devoting almost three years (divided equally between fieldwork and write-up) to an examination of ethnicity in the labor process, I had hoped to formulate a definitive statement on ethnicity's articulation with class. This, of course, was presumptuous; nevertheless in this concluding chapter I will present some theoretical generalizations on ethnicity's relationship to class. My "definitive statement" begins by qualifying the importance of ethnicity, offering "non-ethnic" explanations for some of the major issues I have discussed. I then link ethnicity to ideology and define its importance as its relationship to the process of class struggle. Finally, I end with a discussion of ethnic discrimination. The persistence of racism provides the most concrete "proof" of the importance of ethnicity in structuring both the details of labor processes and also social relations more generally.

14.1 NON-ETHNIC FACTORS IN LABOR CONTROL AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

14.1.1 Overemphasizing Ethnicity

In the Introduction I warned that this dissertation would overstate the importance of ethnicity and that some of the dynamics that I would discuss, could be explained without reference to ethnicity. Because ethnicity dominates popular discourse in Bocas del Toro, it is possible that as a participant/observer in an "ethnically charged" context, I over-emphasize it. To compensate for this, in The Setting I described the international market and political forces within which ethnic
The most effective components of the Company’s preventative repression, have been the promotion of pro-management, ICFTU/AIFLD affiliated unions and the computerized blacklisting of supporters of the independent union movement (see 2.1.2). Already in the 1920s and 1930s Company officials had established a systematic network of surveillance against “labor agitators.” headquarters regularly circulated warnings to the division managers:

TROPICAL DIVISION MANAGERS:

From time to time evidence comes to our attention of the desire of communist elements to foster trouble among the laborers of the Tropical Divisions. ...two typical communist agitators named Fitzsimmons and Hardy are already in Central America for the purpose of spreading ‘red’ doctrines and generally encouraging unrest. ...pass the gist of this information unofficially, to the proper authorities of your country. Should these agitators show up in your Division I will appreciate your advising me (BDA: Circular No. 32-16, Sept. 7, 1932).

Following a major strike in the Company’s Colombia Division in 1928, the photographs of the leaders were circulated to division managers with a brief psychological sketch of each individual (BDA: Memorandum, March 8, 1929). In the 1940s, headquarters ordered division managers to establish formal political “blacklists”:

There are several professional labor agitators who are circulating around the country stirring up trouble. ...I want each division to circulate the other three with the names of known troublemakers that may have been discharged, so that the other divisions can protect themselves against employing these undesirable elements. I leave it to each of you to work out a system whereby when new laborers are being employed, they be checked against the list of troublemakers that you may have as to avoid employing them (BDA: Hager to Costa Rica and Panama Division managers, Feb. 9, 1943).

In the contemporary period, surveillance has benefited from
sophisticated technology. All the major banana companies operating in Costa Rica, for example share a computerized blacklist, containing 4,195 names (SDF: Labor Relations Department, Blacklist, Feb. 25, 1982). Most of the companies supplement the computerized blacklist with personal letters to one another’s labor relations departments, detailing the specific characteristics of “dangerous union organizers”:

William ___ a very active leader and agitator from El Carmen Farm. Pablo _____ likes to steal. Pedro ___ a well-known communist. Vargas ___ was the founder of the union on this farm, very active and with a lot of talent in this activity. Gomez ___ still working, is the most rigid and problematical of all the leaders; he only knows how to say no. He is an agitator and number one enemy of the companies. Arias ___ still a leader but is not problematic (SDF: “File for Exclusive Use of Employees of Confidence 1982”).

The individual in charge of union repression on the PAIS farms, in the Sixaola District, described to me in detail how his “spy system” operated. He referred to it as the “ears in the ground program [ojigos en el suelo]” and assured me that his network was so systematic that it also monitored apolitical laborers who complained excessively about working conditions: “You have to eliminate the ones that complain too much. They can be the most dangerous if you don’t fire them right away.” The political atmosphere on the Bocas plantation, therefore (especially, on the Costa Rican half of the Division) is tense. Even friends do not reveal political orientations or discuss union activities. Correspondence from the Labor Relations Department in Sixaola amply documents the extent of this repressive network:

With the system ‘ears in the ground’ that I have put into operation, I was able to detect the formation of a union within the banana farms…. As a consequence of this we fired 36 workers, see adjoined list: ....

I am following up on this with a second round of firing
to eliminate all the undesireables who have infiltrated the labor force (SDF: Araya to Lohrenge, June 3, 1982).

I am maintaining myself alert and am intensifying the vigilance due to the insistence of the red union in trying to penetrate this zone (SDF: Araya to Lohrenge, Oct. 6, 1982).

A few groups continue to promote the formation of a communist union. This causes me a great deal of work as we have to be very careful. I have in my possession a list of 25 whose affiliation to the red union has been proven. Others are being investigated very discreetly (SDF: Araya to Lohrenge, July 7, 1982).

I have the reds totally controlled. They have not been able to make any advances despite the frequent clandestine visits of communist leaders from San Jose and Limon (SDF: Araya to Lohrenge, Aug. 18, 1982).

Even direct repression, however, assumes an ethnic dynamic. For example, as noted earlier, repression is most severely directed against foreigners whose employment status is more tenuous (see 7.1.4, 13.3.1, 13.3.2). Repeatedly, the Company has deported its foreign workers for union organizing or for participating in strikes. These objective differences in political space translate into differential abilities to resist exploitation. Over long periods of time they spawn distinct political and organizational tendencies and even ideologies within ethnic groups.

This is most dramatically the case with the Black population of West Indian descent. Blacks have been historically vulnerable due to their phenotypical differentiation from the local population, and to their prolonged ambiguous status as third country nationals in Panama and Costa Rica. This introduces an interesting theoretical tension: which half of the dynamic should one emphasize—the ethnic/ideological or the historical/structural? Plantation workers, explain the reluctance of the Black population to involve themselves in the independent union
movement or to support the Communist Party, in strictly "racial" terms (see 7.3.4). Similarly, the Black workers themselves support a "racialist" interpretation; they dismiss radical politics as something fit only for "Latinas of a lower cultural level (see 7.3.1)." From the vantage point of a historical structural-analysis, however, this conservative political orientation can be seen as the logical outcome of a tenuous process of upward mobility combined with several generations of racism and ambiguous nationality. Whatever the root cause of this historically generated ideological orientation in the contemporary period it has become part of the ethnic identity of Blacks in Limón and Bocas. Anti-communism, pro-NorthAmericanism and wariness of unions are cultural markers of Black ethnicity.

Guaymi hostility towards the independent union movement can also be understood in terms of their differential vulnerability to repression. Guaymi day laborers do not have access to alternative sources of cash income. When they are fired they are forced to return to the subsistence-level poverty they left in their home communities on the Reservation. Their limited social skills in non-American Indian society prevent them (in contrast to Blacks and Latinos) from migrating to other parts of the country in search of employment. This is exacerbated by the Company's blacklist circulated to the other major employers in Bocas del Toro province. Although all ethnic groups are subject to Company repression, it hits hardest those Guaymi who have acquired cash needs. Unemployment for the plantation Guaymi requires a switch in economies and lifestyles not merely a change in employers.

Some of the ethnic groups become targets of repression simply because
of their small numbers and visibility. This is the case, for example, with the Kuna. In my discussion of the Kuna, I emphasized how their "traditional" structures have been harnessed by the Transnational and how this has de-politicized them; yet it is also true that when Kuna individuals become involved in independent union organizing the Transnational is especially prompt in firing them in order to set an example to the rest of the Amerindians. For example, the Kuna leader who cooperated with the militant union movement and who supported the 1982 Sixaola strike was immediately fired and blacklisted (see chapter 11 fn.22). Similarly, according to the secretary general of the independent labor union on the COBANA farms, two Kuna workers who offered to "persuade the rest of their people to join" were immediately fired as soon as they began proselytizing.

14.1.3 Flooding the Labor Force

The ethnic factor may also have been overstated in my descriptions of how the Company searches for strike breakers (5.3.1, 13.2.3), and of how it selects new cohorts of the most "exploitable" workers for incorporation into plantation wage work (8.2, 12.2). The replacement of militant workers by more compliant workers assumes an ethnic dynamic on a phenomenological level (i.e., Blacks were replaced by Nicaraguans in the 1920s, Latinos by Guaymí in the 1950s etc.), it is not clear how important ethnicity is to management when it makes decisions on which group to recruit. To a large extent supply and demand and common sense dictate these decisions. During times of labor crisis, the Company floods its plantations with inexperienced peasants. Ethnicity is neither irrelevant nor determinant on these occasions. For example, at
the turn of the century a hungry Barbadian peasant made a better strike breaker than a hungry Jamaican peasant when the strikers were primarily composed of Jamaican laborers. Liens of solidarity and communication obviously form more rapidly between fellow nationals. There is a limit, however, to the importance of this national/regional/ethnic solidarity. Impoverished Jamaican peasants imported straight from the countryside in 1910 more readily broke strikes of fellow Jamaicans on Central American plantations than did experienced Barbadian banana workers who had resided in Central America for several years. In other words, veteran Barbadian and Jamaican banana workers on United Fruit Company subsidiaries had more in common with one another as workers, than did Jamaican banana workers and newly immigrated Jamaican countryfolk as compatriots. For example, just following World War I, a Company recruiting agent requested permission from the Bocas Division manager to import Jamaican peasants to replace experienced Jamaican laborers:

...they are arranging another strike very soon, and I am sure the seeing of the new Jamaicans from the country parts of Jamaica who know nothing about strikes would be of great help and control the situation... (BDA: Coombs to Kyes, April 28, 1919).

Internal Company correspondence from the early 1920s when labor unrest among West Indian immigrants was at a peak, documents how thousands of workers were transferred from one country to another in order to saturate local labor markets, reduce wages and undermine union movements. These massive labor transfers involved complicated shufflings of peoples of different nationalities and ethnicities. The fundamental concern, however was not so much the ethnic/national factor, but rather the physical presence of a sufficient number of cheap laborers willing to undercut the labor movement. Being a monopoly and a
transnational (see 2.3), the United Fruit Company was uniquely able to manipulate this international labor dynamic. For example, in 1921 the Company's subsidiaries in Honduras and Bocas del Toro faced severe labor shortages as new lands were being opened up for banana production. Meanwhile in the Limon Division, the proliferation of Panama disease had drastically reduced labor demand and there was an excess of unemployed West Indians on the Panama Canal due to massive layoffs following the World War I boom. The decisions on how to juggle these uneven labor supplies were made at headquarters by the vice-president in charge of tropical divisions:

I note that the canal Zone Government is figuring on repatriating some 10,000 Jamaicans. ...it is possible that you could fill up your labor supply by taking some of them to Limon and Bocas in suitable batches and turning them loose (BDA: Cutter to Chittenden and Blair, March 1, 1922).

I think it would be worth while for you and Blair [Bocas Division manager] to make a drive at filling up your countries with men. I realize they have union ideas, nevertheless a small surplus might be worth while (BDA: Cutter to Chittenden, Oct. 1921).

Company officials carefully calculated the number of laborers needed to lower wages: "We have enough farm men to carry on the work, but we lack the little surplus necessary to make further reductions in wages (BDA: Blair to Cutter, Nov. 19, 1921)." The graphic vocabulary used by the officials illustrates how intense the level of class struggle was: "...my first idea would be to choke this country up and shift [the surplus] to Honduras... (BDA: Chittenden to Blair, April 8, 1922, emphasis added)." In this particular case, because Honduras prohibited the importation of Black labor, the Company was obliged to transfer Blacks from the Canal Zone into the Bocas and Limon divisions and then to take Latins out of Bocas and Limon and send them to Honduras.
My idea would be to load this country [Costa Rica] with Jamaicans (from the Canal Zone) and gradually shift the Nicaraguans and the good Costa Ricans to Honduras. I am entirely aware that negroes are not admitted to Honduras (BDA: Chittenden to Cutter, May 3, 1922).

The previous employment experience of any given population group rather than its ethnicity, or even its absolute poverty is the most crucial factor in management's decisions over where to recruit workers to break strikes and to flood problematic labor markets. As was noted in the discussions of labor quality, the "worst workers" in Bocas have consistently been individuals previously employed in the Panama Canal or with experience in the United States where conditions were considerably superior (5.3.4, 13.1.3). Even amongst the "best workers" (such as the Guaymi today) there are widely divergent levels of exploitability depending upon the particular cohort's previous employment trajectory, rather than its ethnicity. For example, as was noted in the discussion of Guaymi political orientation there is a distinct dichotomy between those Guaymi who are veteran banana workers or who have been raised on the plantation, and those who are recent immigrants from the countryside (see 9.3.1). There is also the differentiation between Coastal Guaymi and those who are from the headwaters of the Cricamola river (see 8.2.3).

The Transnational's most consistent policy with respect to previous employment experience and regional/national/ethnic origin is to refuse employment to workers from regions where there are banana plantations. The confrontation between management and labor in areas of plantation production is more overtly pronounced. Local residents, even if they have never personally worked for a transnational are familiar with the
notion of unions, strikes, and wage hikes. Ironically, therefore, management systematically refuses employment to skilled workers who are considerably more productive because of the danger of previous exposure to union organizing or superior work conditions (see 13.2.3). Latins from Chiriqui province in Panama, and Costa Ricans from Puntarenas province must pretend to know nothing about bananas when they apply for employment in Bocas; they are typically refused employment regardless.

During World War II, with the introduction of abaca, the Bocas Division succumbed to the temptation of hiring experienced laborers to ease its employment crisis, and it imported hundreds of Hondurans who had formerly worked on plantations. The result, was disastrous from management's perspective; the Hondurans engaged in frequent work stoppages and were deported on masse (13.3.1). Despite their severe poverty, therefore, Hondurans had a low tolerance for exploitation. Previous experience on the Company's subsidiaries in their home country gave them a vantage point from which to compare the poor wages and conditions they encountered in Bocas in the abaca fields.

In popular discourse the explanations for the poor work habits of Black North Americans or Latin Chiricanos and Hondurans are invariably expressed in strictly ethnic (usually racist) terms. Nevertheless on occasion, Company officials explicitly explained to me the relationship between a worker's "exploitability" and his/her previous experience in the class struggle. For example, when I asked the Bocas manager how he had chosen the regions from where he recruited strike breakers during the 1982 Sixaola District work stoppage, he answered, "Hell! We didn't care, just so long as they came from far away. We sent our buses to where
they knew nothing about bananas."

14.1.4 Cross-Ethnic Patterns

Perhaps the best way to qualify the importance of ethnicity in structuring worker behaviour is to note some of the universal patterns common to all the ethnic groups. In this respect, the historical trend of differential exploitability by ethnic group is illustrative i.e., the replacement of Latins by Guaymi (1950s) and Blacks by Latins (1920s) as the most exploitable workers in Bocas. In other words, from management's perspective, the Guaymi workers of today are equivalent to the Nicaraguan laborers of the 1930s who, in turn were the same as the West Indians of the turn of the century. It is not ethnicity, per se which has determined each of these three ethnic groups' procession up the class/ethnic occupational hierarchy; rather, it is the conflicitive historical process of changing economic constraints in the context of constant struggle. Of course, at the phenomenological level this struggle is mediated by ethnicity.

One can even discern patterns of behaviour during set historical periods common to each of the three ethnic groups—Blacks, Latins, and Guaymi—depending upon which rung they occupy in the class/ethnic hierarchy on the plantation. Each of these three ethnic groups react in comparable ways to similar forms of oppression. For example they have all passed through phases of conjugated oppression when they were exploited both economically and ideologically. When Black workers in the 1910s and 1920s were subjected to a combination of racism and class exploitation they responded with the explosive Marcus Garvey movement (see 7.2.4). The comparable Guaymi response to the same structural form
of oppression in the early 1960s, was the 1960 strike and the masachi religious movement. Latinos, on the other hand, even when they were at the bottom of the local class hierarchy (1930s-1940s) were never submitted to as intense a level of ethnic discrimination as were the Blacks and the Guaymi. Consequently there has not been the same explosive mass response to conjugated oppression among the Latin laborers; nevertheless, the descriptions of their wanton violence and massive alcoholism during the 1930s through World War II—and to a certain extent observed during my fieldwork—is best understood as a manifestation of a class/ideological domination.

A more easily identifiable pattern which illustrates the limits of ethnicity in structuring behaviour is the universal response to the option of becoming a small farmer when offered land and access to a market. All the ethnic groups leave day labor employment in favor of "independent" farming when presented with the option. Although Blacks express their distaste for plantation wage work most articulately because of their collective memory of their ancestors' traumatic exploitation as slaves on colonial plantations, all the ethnic groups, when questioned offer the same types of reasons for why they prefer farming to agricultural day labor: "I like to be my own boss. No one hassles me. I work when I want to. I'm more secure."

Another cross-cultural commonality is the generational component to political orientation. Older workers, regardless of their ethnicity tend to be more supportive of the independent union movement than young workers new to the labor force. This is consistent with my previous findings on employment trajectory: the more experience workers have with
management, the more aware they become of their economic/class interests. Of course, this is complicated by demographic considerations, i.e., workers with families--irrespective of ethnicity--are less willing to take risks and to involve themselves in strike movements than are single men and women (see chapter 6 fn.6). Another exception is workers approaching retirement age who become extremely conservative due to the insecurity of losing their jobs. In fact, a disproportionate number of the Company informants in the "ears in the ground" program were older workers striving to curry favor to prevent themselves from being laid off.

14.1.5 Ideology or Class?

On a theoretical level, these pan-ethnic constants in attitude and behaviour heighten the tension between ethnic and structural explanations. The case of the Black population is most illustrative of the complex relationship between class and ideology because the Black work force has spanned the longest historical period of any group on the plantation. They have also undergone the most dramatic class mobility and ideological transformation of all the ethnic groups. In chapter 7, I showed the historical and structural basis for the conservative shift in Black ideology. Similarly, in the previous discussion of repression, I noted that the structural vulnerability of Blacks to repression affected their political orientations. Other aspects of Black political activity can also be explained in this manner without specific reference to ethnicity. For example, during the 1934 strike in the Company's Limon Division, historians have noted that the strike was weakest in the Estrella valley District (and non-existent in the Sixaola District)
where the concentration of Black workers was considerably higher than in
the rest of Limon (Koch 1975:273). Rather than noting that the Estrella
District had the highest percentage of Blacks, one could choose to
emphasize the fact that it had the highest percentage of
semi-proletarianized workers (i.e., part-time workers who cultivated
their own private plots on the side). Semi-proletarian banana workers
are more difficult to organize and are also more likely to offer
themselves as strike breakers. Consequently, in 1934, in the Estrella
valley, the Company was able to recruit strike breakers locally since
there was such a large contingent of part-time workers in the immediate
vicinity who were in desperate need of cash to finance their insolvent
private farms. Of course, the fact that most of these semi-proletarian
strike breakers were Black at this particular point in history was not a
coincidence; it was part of the historical process of upward mobility
and ethnic discrimination (see chapter 6).

In the same vein, there is a tension in the discussion of the
localistic divisions within the West Indian labor force between treating
these national/regional and even localistic divisions as expressions of
ethnic differentiation, or analyzing them in objective economic terms
(see 5.3.3, 5.3.4). For example, should the relative exploitability of
Martinican workers versus Trinidadians or Jamaicans be presented in
terms of ethnicity or as the result of objective economic differences
and/or historical experiences in the local class struggle in their natal
islands? Similarly, in the discussion of the diversity of communities
which compose the dockworker labor force in Almirante in the 1930s (see
5.3.3), I noted that the Company was able to benefit from a balkanized
work force full of localistic community-based divisions. Closer
examination of these divisions, however, reveals objective differences in the class interests of these dockworkers. Some were semi-proletarians, while others were full-time wage workers.

A final, more immediately accessible example of the analytical tension between a focus on ethnicity versus class (or class fractions) is the phenomenon of ethnic constituencies in union elections. In the February, 1983 elections, the Blacks and the Guaymi voted, overwhelmingly pro-management for the white slate while the Chiricano and Latinas voted for the independent red slate. Union leaders attribute Black support for the white slate to the fact that there were five Blacks in positions of leadership on the white slate, compared to only two on the red slate (see also Cabarrus' 1979:85-91 discussion of the 1975 union elections in Bocas). A Black dockworker, however, explained to me that he had voted for the white slate not because there were five Blacks on it but because it had more dockworkers (who happened to be Black) in its leadership. His primary concern was that there be individuals in positions of power in the union who were familiar with the problems of dockworkers. In other words, ethnically-based voting patterns can be understood in terms of the local occupational hierarchy on the plantation and the subdivision of the labor force into class fractions. Following an identical train of logic, a Guaymi harvester on another occasion told me that it was imperative to keep Latinas out of positions of power on the new union slate since no Latinas worked on the harvesting crews. He claimed that Latin union leaders did not "watch out for the interests" of harvesters since none of "their own kind" were involved. Another Black worker in the Materials and Supplies Department told me that he had voted for the white slate despite the fact that he
realized it was subservient to management because he had heard a warning on the radio (in Creole English) that the Company intended to withdraw from Bocas should the red slate win the union elections. As a worker holding a marginally privileged position within the local labor hierarchy, and because of his greater stability, this worker in the Materials and Supplies Department was more susceptible to the Company's threat to withdraw from Bocas than were the Chiricano day laborers most of whom were younger, single and had no long term attachment to Bocas.

14.2 IDEOLOGY AND CLASS STRUGGLE

14.2.1 The Babbage Principle

What does the analytical tension between ideology and structure maintained throughout this thesis contribute to the theoretical debate on class and ethnicity? In this final section I will discuss on a greater level of abstraction the nature of ethnicity and its articulation with the labor process. Although there might be something "universal" about ethnicity (in a Levi Straussian sense, i.e., as a "we" vs "they" boundary marker) that is not what I have been concerned with. In the Introduction I explained that I was interested in ethnicity as an ideology. Ethnicity's significance and definition is rooted in inequality and conflict (i.e., class struggle). Pre-determined traits are merely incidental. That is why it is so important to analyze ethnicity within the context of production.

Divisions in the cultural realm are picked up by the capitalist work process and redefined into ideology. The capitalist division of labor lends itself to ethnic differentiation and antagonism. Almost anything
can serve to exclude people from power. Ethnicity is one such prime vehicle. There is an inherent tendency for management to break down the productive process into its smallest components so that the precise quantities of differentially priced laborers can be assigned hierarchically to distinct tasks. Harry Braverman (1974:80-81) refers to this process as the "Babbage principle" after the nineteenth century British inventor who first illustrated the advantage to management of an assembly production strategy. In a theoretical treatise, Charles Babbage (1963:175-176 cited in Braverman 1974:80-81) demonstrated how pins can be manufactured more cheaply by subdividing up the tasks according to skill and then hiring different kinds of laborers for each task. In Babbage’s example, the remuneration to the differentially skilled labor force of pin makers is subdivided by age and sex (man, woman, boy, girl). On the Bocas plantation, the division of labor is based on ethnicity (with sex and age being important as well but beyond the scope of this analysis).

To a certain extent, the capitalist division of labor in general—and the banana plantation social formation in particular—are pressure cookers for generating ideology, and for escalating ethnic markers into an antagonistic framework. As was noted in The Setting, the process of producing bananas is extremely technical and varied. There are many different tasks requiring varying degrees of skill. The result is a complicated occupational hierarchy which lends itself to ethnic categorization just as Babbage’s nineteenth century pin factory lent itself to a division of labor by sex and age. This is exacerbated by the fact that the transnationals involved in banana production have scoured the world for cheap labor, purposefully importing ethnically
diverse labor forces. They operate in regions with low initial population densities and rigorous working conditions. Consequently, they have been forced to import or attract laborers from outside their immediate area.

Each wave of ethnically distinct laborers was integrated into the stratified occupational hierarchy of banana production at different levels, creating a de facto apartheid division of labor. Because there is such an immediate correlation between a worker's ethnicity and his/her position in the hierarchical production process, ethnic discrimination is fomented to an extraordinary degree on the plantation. The ideology of ethnic superiority and stratification is reinforced by the reality of the productive process. The phenomenon of conjugated oppression assumes its importance in this context. The ethnic group at the bottom of the ideological hierarchy (i.e., the Guaymi following World War II, the West Indians at the turn of the century, or the Nicaraguans in the 1930s) also performs the least desirable and lowest prestige tasks in the class hierarchy.

This joint class/ethnic stratification is not specific to the banana industry. In fact, the extreme form that it has taken in Bocas is, to a large extent, characteristic of the entire Atlantic litoral of Central America which shares a common history and productive structure. Since the mid-nineteenth century, United States-based transnational corporations (primarily extractive industries i.e., logging, mining, bananas, cacao, sugar, and palm oil) have expanded into the region creating a series of booms and busts. These extractive transnationals have created both ethnically diverse populations, and also hierarchical
structures of wage labor relations. The entire region, therefore, has become an incubator for fomenting inter-ethnic tension (e.g. Bourgois 1985, Gordon 1984b).

14.2.2 Divide and Conquer

In other words, the industries introduced by North American capital on the Atlantic Coast of Central America—and especially the social formations revolving around the banana plantation—foment racism and thrive on it. At the same time, however, it is essential to recognize that these transnationals did not invent racism. Racism is not a simple manipulation of management. The dynamic through which ethnic identities develop and reproduce themselves is inherently conflictive and fraught with struggle and inequality. Racism on the plantation in Bocas is a form of ideological domination which has been magnified and institutionalized by the de facto apartheid labor hierarchy but it also exists independently from the Transnational. To ensure the balkanization of its workers, all the Company has to do is maintain the ethnic diversity of its labor force; the natural process of conflict and struggle then takes care of the rest. In fact, historically, racism has overpowered the Company’s economic interests on numerous occasions. For example, the decrees excluding the Chinese from Costa Rica and Panama in the late 1800s, prevented the Transnational from being able to take advantage of an extremely inexpensive labor force.

There is a tendency, nevertheless, for scholars and political activists with an analytical framework based on class, to dismiss racism (and even sometimes ethnic identity itself) as an externally imposed manipulation by management. For example, the very ethnic identity of
the Black population of West Indian descent in Bocas and Limon is sometimes treated as a product of the scheming of the United Fruit Company (cf. Olien 1977:142, Duncan n.d.:5, Herzfeld 1977:105, and Joseph 1982:49). Although it is true that the Company has benefited from the cultural reaffirmation and differentiation of its West Indian immigrant workers, it would be a gross misinterpretation of the dynamic nature of ethnic processes to attribute this to willful manipulation. For example, while it was perceptive on Cabarrus’ part (1979:81) to note that the Transnational encourages folkloric expressions of Kuna culture to promote their separation from the rest of the workforce, one must also understand the revitalization of Kuna institutions as their means for resisting racism and economic exploitation. In other words, the Transnational has not had to willfully foment ethnic differentiation and racism. Ethnicity assumes an ideological dynamic on its own in the process of struggle over power and scarce resources. In fact, as I suggested just above, for the most part, management does not even pay attention to ethnic considerations in selecting its labor force; it is merely interested in finding the cheapest possible laborers no matter what their race, religion or creed.

At the same time, as I have documented, management consciously manipulates ethnic tensions whenever it can (see 5.3.1, 10.3.2). In fact, Company officials in Bocas and even at United Brands headquarters in New York City, revealed to me in interviews that they were keenly aware of the ethnic composition of their labor force. Most notably, when I asked the manager of the Bocas Division why his labor force had remained calm when the Armuelles Division (the Company’s Pacific Coast subsidiary in Panama) experienced protracted labor unrest in late 1983,
he explained:

The Union has become too strong in Armuelles. If the administration there was smart they’d bring in Indians and promote a division between the Latins and the Indians. Divide and conquer... you understand what I mean? ...[chuckle].

Significantly, however, management does not limit itself to ethnic divisions—anything will do. In fact the superintendent of the Sixaola District explained to me that in a confrontation with packing plant workers over piecework payments (see 9.3.2), he purposefully "deviated the discussion" to ridicule the "cholos" so that the workers would vent their frustration over their low wages on a safer subject. He explained the logic of his tactic in theoretical terms that transcend ethnicity per se:

Ticos [Costa Ricans] are undeveloped; they are very nationalistic... and very particularistic. You’ve seen them get all excited about soccer games: farm 96 against farm 97 or 86 against 87. This same thing works real well with cholos. You can play one off the other. It gets the workers all excited.

14.2.3 Ideological Domination

Although explicit statements such as the ones above provide irrefutable documentation for how management manipulates ethnic antagonisms on specific occasions in the concrete practice of the local class struggle, it does not answer the question of how important ethnicity is, or resolve the theoretical tension over the relative emphasis of economic structure versus ideology in social analysis. "Proof" of the importance of ethnicity in structuring social relations is provided by the pervasiveness of racism. Phenomena such as conjugated oppression oblige one to treat ethnic discrimination "on par"
with class exploitation. For example, a comparison of the different roles ethnic discrimination played in the integration of the Guaymi and the Kuna into the Bocas labor force in the 1950s and 1960s reveals how crucial the ideological dimension can be in determining a given population's position within society's hierarchy. Although the Kuna are exploited economically due to their low position in the occupational hierarchy on the plantation, unlike the Guaymi they do not suffer from a conjugated oppression (see 11.3.2).

As was analyzed in detail in chapter 10, the conjugated oppression suffered by the Guaymi has profound political and organizational implications (see 10.2.2, 10.2.3, 10.3.2). It prevents them from allying with the other ethnic groups in order to defend common class interests. Indeed, from the perspective of political and organizational mobilization, racism is an extremely volatile phenomenon. It is the most poignantly felt and easily perceived aspect of oppression confronting a given individual at the bottom of the local class/ethnic hierarchy. By recognizing the importance of racism in structuring political mobilization one can make a stab at resolving the impossible dilemma of assigning relative weight to the importance of class versus ideology in the analysis of ethnicity. The dilemma becomes resolved, not by the unsatisfactory compromise of making the idea versus material relationship "dialectical", but rather by changing the arena for discussion and definition to a more dynamic one—that of class struggle. Racism is an ideological form but it assumes a structural dynamic historically by acting as a means for reordering and reproducing power relations. Perhaps the solution is to treat the analytical tension between class and ethnicity as irrelevant. Ethnicity should be
viewed as a process rather than as a characteristic. In other words, there is no either/or relationship between class and ethnicity; the two are part of the same process of class struggle. For example, when one asserts that management is primarily concerned with a laborer's previous employment history, one is not contradicting the fact that ethnicity is of central importance in determining hiring practices. This is because the ethnicity of any given labor is a product of that laborer's experience in the class struggle i.e., his/her previous employment history.

Irrespective of the theoretical issues involved, this reshuffling of the dialectical relationship between ideology and material reality into the arena of class struggle through a focus on racism is useful from the perspective of praxis. Ideology (no matter how one defines it) plays a crucial role in mobilizing or demobilizing people in the concrete practice of struggle. Regardless of what exactly ethnicity "really is", on a theoretical level, in the day to day reality of the banana workers in Bocas del Toro it mediates political mobilization. Workers legitimate their participation in a strike or a union movement on the basis of their ethnicity, nationality, or regional identity. In order to organize effectively, union activists in Bocas must treat ethnicity at least as seriously as management does. This will not happen until the union movement recognizes ethnic discrimination to be a form of oppression which is as worthy of resisting as is class exploitation. If the United Fruit Company is to be successfully challenged in its Bocas del Toro subsidiary, workers must focus their struggle simultaneously on both class and ethnicity. The persistence of racism historically has structured labor relations on the plantation in as real a manner as has
as real a manner as has monopoly capital.

NOTES

1 The most dramatic case of violent repression was the 1928 Colombia banana strike. The estimates for the number of workers killed by Colombian government troops on that occasion oscillate between 40 and 1,500 (Kepner and Soothill 1935:328-329). During my fieldwork several workers were killed and wounded by security forces during strikes on neighboring banana plantations in Costa Rica. For example, during a two month strike on Del Monte's plantations in 1982, Costa Rican security forces escorted strike breakers into the fields. They shot into crowds of protesting workers on several occasions, seriously wounding many people (La Nación, Sept. 22, 1982:6). Dozens of strikers were imprisoned and several were seriously beaten while in the custody of the security forces (Personal communications of victims). For a selection of newspaper articles on the 66 day strike see: La Nación Sept. 22:6, 26:6, 29:6, Nov.2:6, 20:4, 21:4, 1982; La Libertad Oct. 1-7:1, 1982; La Universidaed Oct. 1-7:18, 15-21, 1982. Similarly during a 72 day long strike in 1984 on the United Fruit Company's Golfito Division, security forces killed two workers and wounded and jailed several others. I personally witnessed the Company's provision of transport to the security forces during this strike. (For selected press reports see: Pacifica Radio news broadcasts, July 18 and 23, 1984; La República July 25, 1984:3; El Debate July 17, 1984; La Nación Internacional Sept. 27-Oct. 3, 1984:4.)

2 A more subtle ploy frequently used to prevent workers from fighting for their economic/class interests, is the promotion of sports. For example, the head of the Labor Relations Department for the Sixaola District requested additional funds to promote sports on the grounds that,

Sports helps distract the worker so that he is not thinking of other issues which later on could cause problems for the Company (SDF: Weekly Labor Relations Report Nov. 5-11, 1983).

3 The Standard Fruit Company (Castle and Cooke) was the first to initiate this computerized blacklist in Costa Rica. All three multinationals, as well as the government organization in charge of regulating the banana industry (ASBANA) pool their data on labor union organizers.

4 Within 48 hours of my arrival on the plantation I was reported to the Labor Relations Office by an informant. I had aroused suspicion for asking too many questions about the January, 1982 Sixaola strike. Needless to say, I was obliged to change my interviewing style dramatically. Throughout my fieldwork, I was afraid of being denounced as a "communist" or as critical of the Company. The level of political
repression was so high that I actually had a recurring nightmare of being thrown out of the barracks in the middle of the night under the pooring rain and being beaten up by the very same Company informants I frequently interviewed.

According to the Roman Catholic bishop of Bocas del Toro the Transnational fired one of his parishioners for union activity and then arranged for him to be fired, once again, when he obtained a job with one of the only other major employers in the province in Chiriqui Grande.

The "serious labor situation" of the Transnational's subsidiary in Honduras prompted the Company to accelerate the transfer of Black laborers to Honduras illegally, by smuggling them into the country at night. The files contain a humorous set of telegrams in code where "birds" stands for Blacks:

If I can arrange for birds trip Bocas to Puerto Castilla (Honduras), am considering putting De Leon (a labor contractor) in charge of collecting birds (BDA: cited in Chittenden to Blair, Aug. 4, 1922).

Scribbled on the back of this letter was a note of explanation, "The big idea would be to let De Leon appear to be doing this for his own account." This smuggling heist ultimately aborted when one of the men involved in the operation "...spilled all the beans in every saloon in town (BDA: cited in Chittenden to Blair, Aug. 4, 1922)."

A code telegram was sent to the manager of the Trujillo Railroad Company:

Loose talk... makes bird traffic absolutely dangerous for the present. Am positive consequences would be serious for you and embarrassing to me (BDA: cited in Ibid.).

Other transnationals operating in the region also pay careful attention to the previous employment trajectory of their prospective laborers. For example in the early 1900s, labor recruiters for the Panama Canal Company rejected workers who had formerly worked on the Canal (Newton 1983:15).

For example, the French Consul in Costa Rica complained to his superiors in 1904:

With elements of penetration such as the United Fruit Company and the Panama Canal Company, the United States have hereby as of now, become the masters of the entire Atlantic Coast of Central America. The complete absorption of this part of the world is just a question of days barring a European intervention (FAA: Report by Emile Jore, French consul in San Jose, March 27, 1904:15 Vol. 1; courtesy of research notes of Dr. Isabel Wing-Ching, University of Costa Rica).

Anthropologist Martin Murphy (1984:5-6) based on fieldwork on Dominican sugar plantations argues that the ethnic antagonisms caused by the importation of Haitian labor during the harvest season is a "fringe benefit" for management:

Many have commented that... these cultural linguistic differences... are one of the motivations for the use of Haitian labor power. We would argue, however, that the
principal incentives for the use of foreign laborers lie in the ability to superexploit these workers and in their exclusion from access to human and civil rights. The division factor due to language and world vision is merely a special 'bonus' for employers of Haitians. These divisions, however, are of great importance to our discussion of labor organization and unity in the sugar industry.
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Source: Edelman 1985:9
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MAP: 6: DISTRIBUTION OF GUAYMI PEOPLES IN PANAMA
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**Figure 1: Historical Summary of Bocas del Toro Division**

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<td>banana boom</td>
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<td>Sixaola and Talamanca (on Costa Rican side of the Division)</td>
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<td>banana bust</td>
<td>West Indians (becoming small farmers), Nicaraguans, Guanacastecans, some Costa Ricans, some Bribris</td>
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**FIGURE 2: LIST OF PROFESSIONS BY ETHNICITY**  
**BOCAS DIVISION, FEB., 1983**

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FIGURE 2: (continued)

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-437-
FIGURE 3:
DAY LABORERS
Bocas Division, Feb., 1983: N=502

- REST OF PANAMA (4.0%)
- KUNA (5.8%)
- CHIRIQUI (13.9%)
- PANAMA CITY (0.6%)
- FOREIGNERS (3.4%)
- BOCAS (30.1%)
- GUAYMI (42.2%)
FIGURE 4:
ALL MONTHLY EMPLOYEES
Bocas Division, Feb., 1983: N=820

- PANAMA CITY (6.2%)
- REST OF PANAMA (6.6%)
- GUAYMI (4.3%)
- FORGIGNERS (8.7%)
- CHIRIQUI (25.2%)
- U.S. (3.0%)
- BOCAS (44.8%)
- KUNA (1.2%)
FIGURE 5:
MONTHLY EMPLOYEES EARNING >$500
Bocas Division, February, 1983: N=249

- REST OF PANAMA (6.8%)
- U.S. (8.8%)
- PANAMA CITY (12.4%)
- FOREIGNERS (8.8%)
- KUNA (0.4%)
- CHIRIQUI (30.1%)
- BOCAS (32.5%)
FIGURE 6:
EMPLOYEES BY ETHNIC ORIGIN #1
BOCAS DIVISION, FEBRUARY, 1983

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FIGURE 7:
EMPLOYEES BY ETHNIC ORIGIN #2
BOCAS DIVISION, FEBRUARY, 1983

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FIGURE 8:
MONTHLY EMPLOYEES BY ETHNIC ORIGIN
BOCAS DIVISION, FEBRUARY, 1983

ALL EMPLOYEES

AREA

SALARIES >$500
FIGURE 9:
SIXAOLA LABORERS BY PROVINCE
1983: N=403

- LIMON (14.1%)
- SAN JOSE (11.2%)
- FOREIGNERS (4.2%)
- ALAJUELA (8.7%)
- CARTAGO (6.9%)
- HEREDIA (2.5%)
- GUANACASTE (39.5%)
FIGURE 11:
SIXAOLA SQUATTERS BY REGION
September, 1980: N=207

- FOREIGNERS (8.2%)
- NICARAGUAN (5.8%)
- NATURALIZED (1.9%)
- CARTAGO (1.9%)
- GUANACASTE (19.3%)
- PUNTARENAS (7.7%)
- LIMON (10.1%)
- ALAJUELA (37.2%)
- SAN JOSE (7.7%)
FIGURE 12:
SIXAOLA STRIKE PARTICIPANTS BY REGION
Jan., 1982: N=133

- Guanacaste (34.6%)
- Puntarenas (14.3%)
- Alajuela (14.3%)
- Limon (8.3%)
- Rest of Costa Rica (9.0%)
- Unknown (4.5%)
- Nicaraguans (9.8%)
- Other foreigners (5.3%)
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Source: Davis 1980:89, Wood 1916:2

*Citizens of Spain
APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVAL ABBREVIATIONS


BCO: Archives of the British Colonial Office. (Courtesy of the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Project.)

BDF: Operational files of the Bocas del Toro Division, Chiriqui Land Company, Panama.

BDA: Historical archives of the Bocas del Toro Division, United Fruit Company, Panama. Unfortunately these "archives" consist of approximately 50 mildewed, cardboard boxes stored in a damp warehouse. Consequently, many files are incomplete and damaged.

BFO: Archives of the British Foreign Office. (Courtesy of the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Project.)

FAA: Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Nouvelle Serie," Quai d'Orsay, Paris, France. (Courtesy of Dr. Isabel Wing-Ching, University of Costa Rica.)

FENAC F.: Files of the National Peasant Federation, Limón, Costa Rica.

IDALF: Files of the Legal Division of the Institute for Agrarian Development, San José, Costa Rica.

ITCO M.F.: Files of the Institute of Land and Colonization, Margarita de Talamanca, Costa Rica. The Margarita de Talamanca office was abandoned during my fieldwork and the files lay strewn in disarray on the floor. In early 1983, PAIS tore down the office and burned the remaining files.

MLF: Files of the Ministry of Labor, San José, Costa Rica.

MGPF: Files of the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Project, African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

PCCF: Files of the Panama Canal Commission.

SDF: Files of the Sixaola District, Bocas del Toro Division, Chiriqui Land Company, Costa Rica.
APPENDIX 4: NAMES CITED IN ARCHIVAL CORRESPONDENCE

Adams, E.C.: Superintendent of agriculture, Bocas Division; 1920s.

Aizpura, V.: Head of Labor Relations Office, Bocas Division; early 1950s.

Alverado, T.: Administrator of Farm 8, Bocas Division; 1956.

Anderson, Carl: Bocas Division employee of West Indian descent in the Materials and Supplies Department, Bocas Division; 1960.


Arias Abilio, Chaves: Peasant evicted from reclaimed UFCO land; 1979.

Arias, Harmeodio: Former UFCO attorney who became president of Panama; 1933.

Atwood: Superintendent of the Abaca District Office, Bocas Division; 1942.

Aycock, J.F.: UFCO official, Tela Division; 1954.

Baggett, S.: Vice-president, UFCO, Boston; 1930s.

Bennett: Superintendent of agriculture, Guabito District, Bocas Division; 1919.

Bieberach, Carlos: UFCO representative, Panama City; 1949.

Bill [surname unavailable]: UFCO agent, Panama City; 1950.

Blair, H.S.: Manager, Bocas Division; 1920s--1930s.

Brenes Cuadra, Rafael: Head of Labor Relations Department, Sixaola District; January 1980-September 1981.


Calder, P.R.: Chief accountant, UFCO, Boston; 1929.

Cantrell, G.W.: Manager, Bocas Division; early 1960s.

Caries, Diosede: Head of Labor Relations Department, Bocas Division;
early 1980s.

Carranza Rodriguez, Didier: Judge in the Limon Labor Court; 1982.

Castañeda, Oscar: Contractor used for the reopening of the Sixaola District; late 1970s.

Castro, Miguel Angel: Chief of land inventory of the Instituto de Tierras y Colonizacion [ITCO]; 1977.


Chase, W.W.: Superintendent of railroads, Bocas Division, and British vice-consul, Changuinola; 1953.

Chiari, Roberto: President of Panama; 1960-61.

Ching, Eduardo: Chief of Legal Department of ITCO, San Jose; 1980.

Chittenden, G.P.: Manager, Limon Division, subsequently responsible for all southern Central American operations and then vice-president of the Chiriqui Land Company, Boston; 1916-1940s.

Coomba, A.F.: UFCO agent, Panama City; 1919.

Cutter, Victor: General Manager, UFCO, Central and South American Department, subsequently vice-president, UFCO, Boston; 1915-1920s.


Diebold, C.W.: Assistant manager, Bocas Division; 1949-1954.

Dixon, C.L.: President and general manager, Coast Steamship Company, New York; 1920s.


Ellis, Crawford: Vice-president, UFCO, Southern Domestic Divisions; 1919.

Engler, Gustav: UFCO doctor, Bocas Division; 1950s.


Fabrega, E.: UFCO lawyer, Panama City; 1928.

Gallimore, L.G.: President of the labor union controlled by management, Bocas Division; 1951.

Gipson Jackson, Ricardo: Peasant evicted from Company land in the Sixaola Valley; 1980.

Gongora: UFCO lawyer, San Jose; 1919 to 1960s.


Granados, R.C. (Colonel): Officer of Costa Rican security forces, Sixaola; 1950s.

Gronbladt, E.R.: Manager, Bocas Division, subsequently UFCO representative, San Jose; 1960s.

Hamer, R.H.: Manager of Pacific Coast Divisions, UFCO, Costa Rica (Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica) and subsequently responsible for Southern Central American Operations; 1940s and 1950s.

Heck: Code name for UFCO labor recruiting agent, Bocas Division; 1949.

Holcombe: Manager, Armuelles Division; 1950s--1960s.


Jacome, Tomas: UFCO agent, Panama City; 1930s.

Johnson: Manager, Armuelles Division; 1963.


Kelley, J.S.: Manager, Bocas Division; early 1940s.

King, A. R.: Manager, Bocas Division; early 1960s.

Kyes, J.M.: Manager, Bocas Division; 1912-1919.


Lippe (Lieutenant Colonel): Costa Rican customs official; 1962.

Lopez, Esteban: Official of Public Relations Department, Chiriqui Land Company.

Panama City: 1950s to early 1960s.

Lopez, Esteban: Port inspector, chief of the Resguardo Nacional, Bocas del Toro; 1943.


Mais, V.T.: Chiriqui Land Company agent, Panama City; 1950s.

Mallet, Claude: British Consul, Colon; 1919.
Marsh, M.M.: UFCO official in charge of shipping, Boston; 1930s.


Mathies, L.V.: UFCO official, Bocas Division; 1950s.

Miskell: UFCO official, Armuelles Division; 1935.

McAdams: British consular official, Panama; 1919.

McFarland: UFCO representative, Panama City; 1910s-1920s.


Mehafer: Governor of the Panama Canal Zone; 1946.


Miller: UFCO official, Bocas Division; 1954.

Miller, R.O.: Vice-president, UFCO, Boston; 1960.

Mojica, Andres: Head of Labor Office, Panama; 1932.

Moore, Franklin: Senior assistant vice-president, UFCO, Boston; 1950s.

Moreno, Pedro: UFCO lawyer, Panama; 1962.

Morris, Samuel: Representative of the Kuna Amerindians in Colon; 1953.

Mullins: UFCO lawyer, Costa Rica; 1914.

Munch, G.D.: Manager, Bocas Division; 1950s.

Murray, J.R.: Charge d'affaires of the British Legation, Panama; 1919.

Myrick, G.A.: Manager, Armuelles Division, subsequently Manager, Bocas Division; 1940s and 1950s.


Oller de Sarasqueto, Rosario: General inspector of the Ministry of Labor, Panama City; 1957-1963.

Olotebilquina: Sabila of the Kuna Amerindians, Blas Blas; 1950s through 1960s.

Pascal, Bernard: Methodist reverend of French West Indian descent, evangelized and taught school among the Guaymi; 1917 to 1950s. (Pseudonym).

Peith: Official of Railroad Maintenance Department, Bocas Division;
1953.


Pollan, A.A.: Executive vice-president, UFCO, Boston; 1943.

Porras, Belisario [Dr.]: President of Panama; early 1920s.


Ramos: Official of Ministry of Labor, Panama; 1954.

Reyes, Jose: President of Panama; 1954, assassinated in 1955.

Richards, R.: Superintendent, Sixaola District; 1954.

Redmond: Vice President, UFCO, Boston; 1950s.

Rivers, Jorge: Head of Labor Relations Department, Bocas Division; late 1950s through the 1960 strike.

Robertson: Chief engineer, Bocas Division; 1914.

Rodriguez, Demetrio: Inspector of Ministry of Labor, Bocas del Toro; 1957.

Ruiz: Chief of Land Department of Ministry of Agriculture and Industry, San Jose; 1960.

Schmershorn: General manager, UFCO, Central and South America Department, Boston; 1910s.

Sanderson, N.E.: official of UFCO, San Jose; 1950s.

Schmershorn: General manager, UFCO, Central and South America Department, Boston; 1910s.

Scott, V.E.: UFCO agent, Tegucigalpa, Honduras; early 1950s.

Sherman-Goldig, Peter: UFCO official, Bocas Division; 1960.

Shouts: Chair of Isthmian Canal Commission; 1906.


Smith I.M.: Employee, Bocas Division, informant to management of union activity during the 1960 strike.

Smith, Ike: Head of Engineering Department, Bocas Division; 1953.

Smith, William: Husband of the daughter of the Bribri King; 1910s.

Solis: Costa Rican customs official at Sixaola bridge; 1962

Stevens, John: Chief engineer of the Panama Canal Company; 1906.

Stone, Morgan: UFCO agent, Panama City; 1940s.

Taylor, C.B.: Comptroller, UFCO; 1929.


Turnbull, W.W.: Manager, Tela Division; 1951.


Villagrán, Daniel: Head of Indigenous Relations, Bocas Division; 1950s.

Volio: President of the Costa Rican Congress; 1921.

Walter, Canon: Reverend of St. George's Rectory, Basseterre, St. Kitts; 1963.

Wells, R.C.: Superintendent of aerial spraying, Bocas Division; 1960.

Whittaker, Charles: U.S. consul, Panama; early 1950s.

Wood, John: United States congressman; 1946.

Zapata: Banana worker and labor union organizer, Panama; 1950.

Zeledon, Carlos: Head of Labor Relations Department, Sixaola District; early 1980s.

Zuniga Madriz, Domiciano: Peasant evicted from reclaimed UFCO land; 1978.
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El Tiempo, Limon, Costa Rica (Spanish version of The Times)
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Kalubaki Boletin Informativo de Kuna Yala, Ustupo, Panama.
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La Opinion, Costa Rica
La Prensa, Costa Rica
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La Republica, Costa Rica
La Tribuna, Costa Rica
La Universidad, Costa Rica
La Voz del Atlantico, Limon, Costa Rica
Libertad, Costa Rica
Limon Weekly News, Costa Rica
Solidaridad, Chicago
The Jamaican Times
The New York Times
The Panama Tribune
The Star and Herald, Panama
The Times, Limon, Costa Rica (English version of El Tiempo)
The Voice of the Atlantic (English version of La Voz del Atlantico)
Trabajo, Costa Rica (newspaper of the Communist Party)
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Adams, Richard  

Agee, Phillip  

Aguirre Beltran, Gonzalo  

Aho, W.  

Allen, Robert  

Austin, Diane  

Babbage, Charles  

Barber, Bernard  

Barrera, Mario  

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1980 Carlos, el Amanecer Ya No Es una Tentacion. La Habana: Casa de las Americas.

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1949 Watchmen on the Walls; Moravian Missions in Nicaragua During the Last Fifty Years. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: The Society for Propagating the Gospel.

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1977 El Universo Bananero en Centroamerica. San Jose:
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Philosophy, Literature and Education.

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Indians of Panama. Cambridge MA: Occasional Paper #3 of
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Geography.

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    Office, Smithsonian Institute, Bureau of American Ethnology
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    National University of Costa Rica, Department of Social
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    Columbia University Press.

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    Washington Press.

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1901 Alguns Apuntes Sobre Inmigracion. San Jose: Tipografia Nacional.

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Rosaldo, Renato

Rude, George

Sanchez, Jose Leon

Sanchez, Salvador
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Sassen-Koob, Saskia

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