

One Hundred Years of United Fruit Company Letters

The United Fruit Company is the quintessential model for the institutional form of the multinational corporation that changed the face of the world during the twentieth century. Legally established in 1899 in New Jersey through the merger and acquisition of several different banana production and import companies operating in Central America and the Caribbean, it was a pioneer of capitalist globalization. Through vertical and horizontal integration, the United Fruit Company consolidated the monopoly of both production and commercialization within a global free-market capitalist context. At the same time, it was buttressed by the political, military, and economic might of the U.S. government. It replaced the predecessor international corporate form, which had dominated the colonial era through government-sponsored international trade monopolies.

The following selection of internal archival documents of the United Fruit Company, dating from 1914 to 1970, provides an intimate view of day-to-day interactions and concerns at the highest, most confidential levels of United Fruit Company management. The documents consist of discussions, reports, and directives by managers, lawyers, accountants, undercover informants, and lobbyists documenting strategies for reducing taxes, increasing labor discipline, consolidating landholdings, and maximizing political influence. The documents make the bureaucratic logic of monopoly capital during its era of heightening consolidation come alive in intimate detail. They also provide vibrant testimony to the repeated and diverse attempts by workers (and occasionally host-country governments) to organize in defense of their rights on the plantation.

Some of the letters and reports from the archives reproduced here make the United Fruit Company appear to be an omnipotent total institution—à la Erving Goffman (1961)—capable of controlling not just political and eco-

conomic outcomes but even the basic tenor of social and psychological relations. Other documents reveal that the company, no matter how powerful and effectively organized, was often unable to achieve its will unilaterally whether it be through bribery, interpersonal cajoling, direct threat, manipulation of data, physical violence, or more impersonal economic institutional might. The archives demonstrate that management was often divided over strategy and, more important, that company policies were frequently inconsistent with the pursuit of long-term corporate interests and even short-term bottom-line profits. The archives provide a bird's-eye view into the ideological blinders worn by company officials. By demonstrating the social, political, and even cultural considerations that drove technical management decisions, they complement Marcelo Bucheli's essay in this volume, which analyzes United Fruit Company production-versus-commercialization restructuring strategies based on the financial statistics published in annual reports. They reveal the impetus for confrontational action generated by what Pierre Bourdieu (and Wacquant 1992) would call the company's "field of power," from debates in Boston boardrooms to bullets in Central American drainage ditches. Michel Foucault (1978) could have used these documents to describe the process of "governmentality" on corporate plantations, had the shaping of Latin American worker struggles in the context of the rise of multinational corporations in the twentieth century been one of his political and intellectual concerns.

Often company managers reveal themselves to be trapped in bizarre and often zealously abusive policies because of their ideological blinders and because of the force of the pathways shaping their actions and beliefs. In particular, the documents that focus on managerial manipulation of the ethnic composition of the labor force provide an especially rich display of the pseudoscientific racist theories upheld by the elite of the United States with respect to how best to administer "natives" or "tropical laborers." In its attempts to jockey for advantage the company drew from a wide repertoire of strategies operating at very different social levels: from the macropolitical economic such as the manipulation of the size of the local labor supply, the killing of labor union organizers, and the expulsion of leaders of ethnic-rights movements, to the micropsychological, including subtle evaluations of the intelligence of "communist agitators," profiles by confidential informants of the vanity and drinking

habits of clandestine union organizers, and the promotion of sports events and popular movies to distract workers from working and living conditions.

I WAS NOT TRAINED in archival research when I sought access to the plantation to conduct fieldwork for my dissertation. As a cultural anthropologist, I assumed the bulk of my doctoral dissertation research data would be participant-observation fieldwork notes supplemented by a dozen or so oral-history tape recordings and maybe one basic questionnaire. This is indeed what I collected during most of the eighteen months (from mid-1982 through 1984) that I spent living in the workers' barracks of the Chiriqui Land Company, a United Fruit Company subsidiary that spanned the borders of Costa Rica and Panama. I conducted my interviews in the context of relaxed, free-flowing conversations. Much of the time I simply hung out and made friends—although, admittedly, often strategically—with whoever was willing to talk to me.

Ironically, this purposefully subjective anthropological style of interaction for obtaining research data resulted in my fortuitously stumbling into full access to a century of United Fruit Company archives containing management's most confidential documents. At the time, approximately one year into my fieldwork, I had become an almost mascotlike figure to management and workers alike. The managers both on the plantation and at United Fruit Company headquarters in New York City and San José, Costa Rica, granted me permission to live on their property and interview their workers. The Costa Rican subsidiary headquarters even provided me with a formal letter of introduction to facilitate fuller access to their plantations. Consequently, they encouraged me to browse through their filing cabinets after hours without any supervision and even to hand copy into notebooks data from their current labor relations files and production statistics. Local managers liked me and were comfortable with my presence in their offices and homes. They became bored, however, by my constant questions on every aspect of the minutiae of management activities.

My primary research topic was a history of the ethnic composition of the plantation labor force, but I was politically and theoretically committed to the call put out by anthropologist Laura Nader (1972) to study the rich and powerful in order to better understand the lives of the poor. Consequently, I sought ethnographic information on the local political economy of ethnicity

and culture both from the workers and from the local and international power-holders. Although I lived in the laborers' barracks, I intentionally spent long hours socializing with all levels of management, which involved activities that ranged from visits to the luxurious quarters of what was then officially called the "White Zone" (an exclusive residential neighborhood at the heart of the plantation, complete with air-conditioned club, bowling alley, and nine-hole golf course) to drinking sessions in back-alley bars. It also included home-cooked meals with foremen and day laborers in company-built dormitories, as well as in the tin- and thatch-roofed shacks of unemployed migrants, peasant squatters, and petty criminals. Most of the high-level managers were either U.S. citizens or U.S.-educated members of the upper class of Costa Rica and Panama. They were so ethnocentric and class-bounded in their worldview that they could not imagine that a polite, white, university-educated North American could be anything but racist and pro-management.

In requesting permission from company officials for access to their confidential archives I was conscientiously precise about my research interests: a history of plantation culture from its founding at the turn of the century to the present day. Labor relations during the early 1980s, when I lived on the plantation, were tense and violent. One worker was shot to death and his five-year-old daughter wounded by the rural guard during a strike three months before my arrival on the plantation, and approximately a dozen more workers were shot—several fatally—during strikes on other banana plantations during the two years that I lived in Costa Rica. To my surprise, however, my research priorities were judged to be appropriately anthropological and nonthreatening. I serendipitously obtained access to the company's historical archives precisely because of the relaxed, trusting quality of my relationship with managers, which was spawned out of the participant-observation methods of anthropology.

During the early months of my fieldwork, managers informed me that they had several years earlier received orders from central headquarters to destroy all historical archives. This was reconfirmed to me in interviews at corporate headquarters in New York and San José. By a quirk of disorganization—or perhaps because of a subversive appreciation of history by an unsung lower management hero—this did not occur on the plantation subsidiary where I was conducting fieldwork. By sheer dumb luck, I had befriended an aging warehouse foreman who one day led me to the damp, steaming attic of his semi-abandoned

warehouse and told me, “You might find these old papers interesting, because you like to ask so many questions about the old days.”

Tens of thousands of pages of letters and memoranda had been stuffed into four to five dozen unnumbered, mildewed, and rodent-eaten cardboard boxes. The warehouse manager told me to take whatever documents might be useful for my work since they were all meant for destruction anyway. He simply had not yet “gotten around to throwing them out.” Unfortunately, there is no longer any trace of this unique archive. The warehouse was damaged in a major earthquake in 1991 and the structure was leveled. On my last visit in 2000, the foreman had passed away and his former warehouse was the site of a vacant, muddy lot.

Space constraints allow us to publish full copies of only a tiny selection from the almost 2,000 pages of letters I salvaged from that mass of decaying papers. They were selected to provide examples of management concerns and concrete corporate strategies as well as cultural styles. They are organized around three major themes: (1) the development of monopoly power relationships with host-country governments; (2) the organization of ethnic-specific strategies to increase labor control; and (3) the repression of labor discontent and labor-union organizing. The last two themes provide a contextualized meaning to the often abstract term “class struggle,” demonstrating in full detail its actual practice. When I salvaged materials from the archive, I was determined as an anthropologist to go beyond the limits of the economic reductionist analysis that stunted many Marxist approaches in Latin America at that time. Simultaneously, however, I wanted to maintain at the center of my data collection the creative ways in which struggles for human dignity and economic rights shape everyday social relations—from grassroots workers organizing around economic and ethnic rights to high-level corporate power plays geared to flooding regional labor markets, lowering tax rates, acquiring inexpensive land, and promoting pro-management political values.

In the section titled “Monopoly Power” I present the correspondence of company lobbyists in the capital cities of Central America. They speak of direct, usually friendly access to presidents, generals, and dictators as well as to local-level labor inspectors and military officials. They brag about lowering taxes and changing labor laws. They even joke about misrepresenting corporate profits to elected officials. The *pièce de résistance* in this section is a personalized thank-

you letter mentioning an enclosed \$25,000 personal check written to General Torrijos of Panama by Eli Black, the CEO of the United Fruit Company in the 1970s. Four years later, Black committed suicide when it was revealed that he had paid a \$1.25 million bribe to the president of Honduras, General Lopez Ariano, in order to lower banana taxes and break the power of the Union of Banana-Producing Countries (UPEB), which was founded by General Torrijos.

The core of my participant-observation project was published as a book analyzing the history of the company's ethnically based divide-and-conquer labor-control strategies (Bourgeois 1989). Materials addressing ethnic policies are presented in the second section, "Ethnicity of the Labor Force," and include examples of correspondence addressing: the Bribri Amerindians whose land the Company expropriated at the turn of the century; Afro-Antillean immigrants who comprised the bulk of the labor force through the 1930s, with special emphasis on the way the company initially repressed and then accommodated Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association movement; the Cuna Amerindians, with whom the United Fruit Company developed a patron-client relationship, including a paid position for a major traditional elected leader (Sahila) as labor recruiter, disciplinarian, and union buster; the Ngöbe Amerindians (referred to in these documents as the Guaymi or the Cricamola), who entered the labor force in the 1950s under extremely vulnerable conditions and at the turn of the twenty-first century constituted the majority of banana workers; and Latino laborers from all over Central America, who were recruited aggressively in the 1940s because the Afro-Antillean population was increasingly rejecting the exploitive conditions on the plantation by emigrating or by becoming small farmers on homesteaded land. In this "ethnic divide-and-conquer section" I also included letters that outlined the company's more or less conscious manipulation of ethnic and nationalist sentiments in order to promote immigration from neighboring countries and thus augment the supply of more docile labor.

In the final section, "Labor Relations," I selected a range of documents depicting the repression of labor-union organizing and strikes as well as more generic descriptions of the company's intentional flooding of regional labor supplies. These materials complement the valuable original source material on the United Fruit Company's violent repression of workers in Guatemala presented in Cindy Forster's essay in this volume. I included an urgent circular ac-

accompanied by photographs distributed by Boston headquarters to “All Tropical Division Managers,” which identified labor “agitators” and “Anti-American” “red Bolsheviks,” as they were called in the 1920s, and “radical communists” as they were framed in the 1950s. A letter from 1958 reveals Cold War politics in full tilt, with the U.S. government pressuring the company to recognize the anticommunist Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT) labor movement following World War II. Correspondence during the 1950s confirms that the company had begun organizing pro-management unions to weaken the appeal of the socialist labor movement.

Once again, the overall purpose of this brief selection of confidential corporate documents is to make jargon-laden terms such as “field of power,” “total institutions,” the “governmentality of corporate capitalism,” and the “practice of class struggle” come alive in a concrete case study of one of the most powerful institutional forms to have emerged during the twentieth century: the multinational corporation, which has continued to achieve ever-greater global power during the early part of the twenty-first century.

MONOPOLY POWER

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

BOCAS DIVISION

J. M. KYES — MANAGER

J. O. POSEY — ACCOUNTANT

GENERAL OFFICES: 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, BOCAS

ALMIRANTE, R. P.,

At Panama, January 3, 1919.

Dear Mr. Kyes:

This afternoon I received your letter of the 24th acknowledging mine of the 17th relative to the Records Building. This and other letters arrived in Panama

on December 30, but it seems the Company's messenger has not come to the Panama Post Office for FOUR days. I think, after what I told him and the Agent here he will come daily hereafter.

The President this afternoon called my attention to the B/40. per share dividend on United Fruit Company stock, notice of which was published here the other day and seemed to think that we could easily have stood a cent additional tax per bunch. I assured him that this was all sugar and freight profits and explained in a lot of details, mostly made up at the moment, how much sugar lands we had planted and the profit thereon, that we had paid no extra dividends for several years to my knowledge, but we had made little of the \$40. on bananas. He seemed rather relieved after receiving this information and said he was anxiously awaiting our decision on the Records building. He never forgets anything. I told him that I understood from your letter that you had recommended the project to the Boston office. Mr. Cutter seems to think the bank here would oppose the loan. To the contrary they seldom make loans, except in special cases, for more than six months and at 9%. The slaughterhouse loan, signing of which was completed yesterday, rund [sic] for five years, but the income from this is much larger than from the building, and the building is better security.

Sincerely,

[Signed]

E. C. McFarland

[Not on letterhead]

January 7th, 1919.

Mr. E. C. McFarland,

Asst. to Manager,

At Panama City—

Dear Mr. McFarland:—

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of January third and note that the President called your attention to the \$40.00 per share dividend on U. F. Co. stock, and that he seemed to think we could easily stand a cent additional tax per

bunch. I also note the line of conversation you gave him, and hope that you will be able to stave this question off.

A good long while ago he promised Mr. Schermerhorn he would not increase the duty on bananas, and this year he has virtually promised you the same thing. It might be mentioned to him that at least two-thirds of our bananas come from Costa Rica side of the river where we not only pay Costa Rica duties but are also paying Panama duties, and that if Panama raises the duty we will be compelled to ship these bananas out by Limon, or construct a wharf at Gandoca. This would cut Panama revenues down very much indeed. As a matter of fact, if it becomes necessary I think we could probably take this matter up with the State Department at Washington and they would compel some settlement of the question.

Yours very truly,
[Unsigned]
Manager.

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

STEAMSHIP SERVICE

M. C. O'HEARN — GENERAL AGENT

E. G. FESSENDEN — AGENCY ACCOUNTANT

AGENTS FOR:

COMPAÑIA SUD AMERICANA DE VAPORES

ELDERS & FYFFES CO., LTD., S. S. SERVICE

EAST ASIATIC COMPANY, LTD.

CRISTOBAL AGENCY,

CANAL ZONE

January 22, 1924.

Mr. H. S. Blair,
Manager, United Fruit Company,
Almirante, R. P.

Dear Sir:

The situation in the Gatun Lake Region is day by day getting more complicated with the future danger of new buyers entering the field paying new prices to ship direct to New York and San Francisco. In accordance with your instructions that I should do all possible to control all fruits produced in this territory, I am doing all in my power to comply with same, and if it is in order, I would like to make the following suggestions:

To start with it is absolutely necessary that the Company organize and do the buying direct from the producers, as I am sure that most of them would rather do business direct with us rather than have an intermediate man, for as you no doubt know, these people are very suspicious and they are in the belief that Mr. Walker makes a large profit out of their earnings, and it is more plainly impressed on them when the other Companies pay 75¢ for what Mr. Walker pays 60¢. These natives discuss this question among themselves after comparing the difference and wonder why the other companies pay 75¢ and Mr. Walker only pays 60¢.

I being aware of the difficulties we will encounter on entering the territory above mentioned as direct buyers and knowing the propaganda most likely to be used by the agents or the other companies in trying to keep us out, I would suggest that in order to bring their shipments to the lowest figure so as to force them to disorganize, we should accept three quarter fruit for the English market, as well as full three quarter for the New York market. The natives would be very glad to give us three quarter fruit for the following reasons: First that they would receive their money ten days prior to the time if they were to give us full three quarter grade instead. Second, that the load would be much lighter for them to bring from their patch to the edge of the Lake (this is the part of the work they hate to do), as all the carrying is done by shoulder, fruit being transferred in this way half a mile to three quarters of a mile, to their Cayucas and from there on by water to the receiving stations or lighters which in many instances are located three and four miles. This distance by water is always taken into consideration by the natives, and although time with them is no object, they hate to part with a part of their earnings in such cases, as when they own only one cayuca that may hold approximately fifty stems and they have seventy stems to bring they then are obliged to hire an extra cayuca, which certainly

breaks their hearts at the time of paying for the extra cayuca. Now if we were receiving three quarter fruit in all probability the same cayuca could carry instead of fifty stems seventy.

These natives are very ignorant, but when it comes to counts dollars and cents they are as smart as any other so, therefore, knowing them as well as I do (as well as their weak points), is the reason for which I suggest that we accept fruit for the English market until such time as the other companies have been routed. There are also many other reasons to the advantage of the fruit seller in giving us three quarter fruit, which I do not make mention of, as you are well familiar with them, but which nevertheless I will certainly bring to the attention of the native producers.

My reason for accepting fruit for the New York market is that in all probabilities for the first few months the fruit brought in by the natives will be of a mixed grade, and being aware of the delicate proposition of shipping fruit to England, I would no doubt after separating same have fruit of a full three quarter grade. I am sure that by buying the two grades we can keep the Lake Region cut down to where it would not pay anybody to waste time and money for securing a few stems.

With reference to Mr. Walker: I should [note] that he controls between 1200 to 1500 stems of fruit per week, that is, part of it produced by squatters on the land he lately bought from President Porras, and from a tract of land known as the Cespedes land, the other part being obtained through small loans which he makes to the small producers in the Lake. You are no doubt very well aware that the natives do not comply with their promises, and regardless of who goes there to do the buying, just as long as there is some advantage over the other, they will always give him some fruit, so you can readily see that it is out of the question for Mr. Walker to control the production in the Gatun Lake Region.

These suggestions are made by me with the view of urging the Company to go openly in the Lake as I have heard rumors that Mitchell at one time a partner of Mr. Walker, wishes to establish himself here and ship fruit to San Pedro, California, where I understand he has made arrangements with Henry & Company of Los Angeles, to take all the fruit delivered there. I also understand that Juan Diaz, at one time an agent for Perino (American Banana Corp), expects to buy sometimes in the near future and ship to New York. This man has already purchased a first class gasoline launch and is getting equipment.

Trusting that this report contains all the information desired by you, I remain,

Respectfully,

[Signed]

D. O. Phillips

cc Mr. M. C. O'Hearn,
Mr. E. C. McFarland,

[Carbon copy, not on letterhead]

Chiriqui Land Company

[Handwritten note] *Hank, note & return.*

[Initialed] — *H. F.*

[Handwritten note] *Mr. Spence: Please note. Also Mr. Spence please initial. — M. N. 1/2/51*

Panamá, R. P.

December 12, 1950

Mr. G. A. Myrick — Armuelles

Mr. G. A. Myrick — Almirante

Dear Mr. Myrick:

With further reference to my letter of December 9th regarding minimum wage scale, etc., and our telephone conversation yesterday, I called on the President this morning and discussed the situation with him.

The President told me that he had heard about this report from one of his deputies and that he had made it very clear to him that Assembly could not establish minimum wage for our Company without making it general throughout the country and that no agriculturist could afford to pay any such wages. That if they tried to make it effective only against our Company or only in the Provinces of Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro it would be unconstitutional [*sic*]. Also that he did not want any publicity given this matter as it would only tend to drive foreign capital away from the country when his Government was trying to encourage foreign capital to invest here.

I told him that I hoped [the] matter would be killed in the commission because if it came up for discussion in the Assembly, it was going to cause a lot of discussion, even though I felt sure that it would be defeated there. He said he was going to take care of that.

I then told him that as far as appointment of Labor Inspector / Judge in Armuelles and Almirante that we would be glad to see this happen as it would save both Company officials and labor time and money. I also told him that if Assembly approved appointment of Labor Inspector / Judge in Almirante that his Government could save money by eliminating similar position in Bocas. He thanked me very much for this suggestion and said that he agreed there would be no need for Inspector in Bocas if there was one in Almirante.

During our conversation and, again, just as I was leaving, he asked me to tell you not to worry as he could guarantee that no minimum scale would be established.

While waiting to see the President "Tito" Arias, who is now owner of LA HORA, came in and sat next to me and told me that he was very sorry about the manner in which LA HORA had been attacking us but that we could expect it to continue until end of this month. That when he took over this paper there were some employees who were very unfriendly but whose contracts did not expire until end of this month, and that he would not have full control of this paper [sic] until after January 1, 1951. He said that he hoped we would not pay any attention to these attacks.

I thanked him for the information and pointed out to him that we had not tried to defend ourselves by publishing anything in the other newspapers so he could be sure that we were not taking these attacks too seriously although we did not like to see them.

[Illegibly signed]

Copy Messrs Pollan, Turnbull, Baggett

[On letterhead]

UNITED BRANDS COMPANY

PRUDENTIAL CENTER

BOSTON, MASS. 02199

(617) 262-3000

6 November 1970
Brigade General Omar Torrijos
Commander of the National Guard
Panama, Republic of Panama

My Dear General Torrijos,

It was a pleasure for me to receive your personal letter through the conduit of the Honorable Shlomo Glikberg.¹

A check for \$25,000 is the object of this package to you from our Honorable Vice President, Harvey Johnson, and from our managers in Panama, in the name of the United Fruit Company and its subsidiary, the Chiriqui Land Company, as a gift to the children of Panama.

The cause that you and your wife defend is truly of great merit and we are pleased to be part of your efforts. This present is a symbol of our mutual cooperation and good will toward the government and people of Panama and its companies.

Please convey my warmest respects to His Excellency President Lacas, whom I had the pleasure of meeting during his recent visit to New York.

I beg you to accept my best wishes for your good health.

Attentively,

[Signed]

Eli M. Black, President of the Board

ETHNICITY OF THE LABOR FORCE

[Not on letterhead]

Limon, January 17th, 1914.

E. Mullins,

San Jose.

Dear Sir:—

At Corona, Talamanca I have two pieces of land which for a long time have been cultivated with cocoa and other products, which I acquired with my wife

by will of her father, the King of that region Sr. Francisco [*sic*] Saldaña. Now I am prohibited to work those lands by the representatives of the United Fruit at that place alleging that the Company owns the land. Apart of the rights which since immemorial times I have acquired, due to the possession of the first cultivators of the lands which I have continued for so many years, I cannot see how the United Fruit Company can have acquired a cultivated land in those conditions and much more than it considers itself with a right to exact from me the ejection from legitimately belongs to me, in such a manner that the act they are trying to exercise is out of order and gives me the right to exercise procedures which I am trying to avoid. —

For this reason I refer the matter to you in order that in future I be not despoiled of what I have and belongs to me or I am indemnified for the cultivations and damages and prejudices corresponding to me.

I trust you will issue your orders and that you will favor me with a prompt reply addressed in care of don Juan Rafael Alvarado at Limon.

[Unsigned]

Sgd. William Smith.

[Not on letterhead]

April 28, 1919

Colon,

R. de Panama.

155 D. Street

c/o United Fruit Co.

Cristobal.

Mr. J. M. Kyes

Gen. Manager, Bocas Division

Unites [*sic*] Fruit Company.

Sir:

I am sending you under separate cover a newspaper published and printed in Panama called the "Workman" which you will see contains an outrageous publication regarding the past strike in Bocas. This from some malicious view to

injure the Company's interest has been widely circulated throughout Panama, and if I understand correctly said information came through Shaw Davis, Winter and Samuder all of Bocas.

Owing to this malicious publication I find it very hard to get the right kind of men here. I am therefore asking your permission and authority to proceed to Jamaica where I am sure I can do twice as much work, in getting a better selection of hard-working men, within the reach of pay. I can have it so arranged to bring my men to Colon and connect them with the Moter [*sic*] Schooner to Bocas.

Sir, all this I can have done without the slightest trouble or unnecessary expense to the Company, my reason for suggesting this trip to Jamaica, is that some of the men who have returned to Panama claim that 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, hoping this will receive your approval, while, I await your instructions to proceed.

There is also here in Panama, a man by the name of Benito Charmingo, one of the old farm hands of Bocas, who is a native of Chiriqui and is desirous to return to Bocas but wants to bring, he says about a hundred machet [*sic*] workers along with himself, all these men are natives, shall I give them transportation? Please advise.

I am,
Respectfully,
[Signed by A. F. Coombs]

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

BOCAS DIVISION

GENERAL OFFICES

131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

SIXAOLA PLANTATION

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT

Guabito, June 26th, 1919.

Mr. H. S. Blair,
Manager,
Almirante.

Dear Sir:—

I return herewith your file on the subject of Indian reservation in Talamanca. I believe that we should get some definite ruling on this question before buying anymore Squatter cultivations in Talamanca and it is most desirable that we proceed with these purchases as rapidly as possible.

In a short trip through the eastern end of the Valley last week I found several people, whose cultivations in another part of the valley have been purchased, who had signed an agreement to make no more cultivations on Company property. In every case they told me that they had cultivated their present holdings because the land had been pointed out to them as part of the Indian Reservation.

Among these cultivations were those of Samuel Levy which is by far the biggest and best in the valley at present and of Solomon Paddyfoot. Levy sold his former holding to the Company on January 26th, 1917 for \$400. and Paddyfoot sold on the same date for \$75. Both these men claim that the land on which their cultivations are now located was pointed out as Indian Reservation by Alejo Jimenez who at that time was Jefe Politico in Talamanca.

In order to settle this question definitely I suggest that some kind of Official ruling be obtained from San Jose and that, with this in hand, a Costa Rican Lawyer who is also a Notary Public come over to assist us in drawing up the contracts of sale. It should also be determined whether Jamaicans not naturalized citizens of Costa Rica can acquire titles in a reservation supposedly set aside for Talamanca Indians.

Alejo Jimenez is still in the country and if we could employ him to aid in making these purchases his assistance might be of considerable value. On the other hand he might be antagonistic and make it much harder to come to an agreement with the squatters. Is there not some one who knows him by whom he can be sounded?

Yours very truly,
[Signed by G. S. Bennett]

Superintendent Agriculture.

GSB/R

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. P. CHITTENDEN, MANAGER

D. C. TAYLOR, ACCOUNTANT

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, SAN JOSÉ, LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION

LIMÓN, COSTA RICA.

December 21st, 1919.

V. M. Cutter, Esq.,

Vice-President, United Fruit Co.,

Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

On December 17th, Wednesday, Mr. Fred Gordon, the Acting British Vice-Consul of Limon, told me that he had been informed by Fowler, a Jamaican, who is in charge of affairs of the Negro Improvement Association here, that Henrietta Vinton Davis, the international organizer of the Negro Improvement Association, had just landed in Colon, and that she intended shortly to visit Bocas and Limon.

A perusal of the attached file will show you the steps taken by me, and will show you the steps taken by Mr. Blair at Bocas. Mr. Blair's letter of December 19th, was written before receiving my letter of the same date. We arranged by guarded conversation on the telephone to inform each other fully in writing, and the two letters are the result.

We have two courses open to us:

First. To do everything we can to prevent her admission to this country, or to Bocas.

Second. To wait a little while before acting, in the hope that Miss Davis will

overstep herself on the Canal Zone and so act as to give the Canal Zone authorities cause for arrest; furthering at all times any action of the British authorities or the Costa Rican authorities to prevent her landing. In other words, keeping ourselves as much in the dark as possible, in order to be in a position to make the best of it should she finally land at either port.

The Jamaicans here state openly her arrival will start a strike and that they are just awaiting her arrival in order to so start. Her action so far on the Zone, and the action of her agent in Bocas, as reported by Mr. Blair, would tend to show that the main object is the sale of stock. Stock can only be sold to those who are earning money. Miss Davis is probably intelligent enough to realize this and I believe there is a chance that she will encourage the goose to lay the golden eggs, rather than advocate a strike, which would stop the purchasing power of the Jamaicans.

I am figuring that this letter will reach you before she leaves the Canal Zone. You have our policy expressed in these letters, and there will be plenty of time for a change in such policy if you so instruct.

We are taking a chance to allow her to land at all if it is in our power to stop her, as she has only to lift her finger when she gets here to start trouble that it might take months to smooth over.

There is a great difference between our Government allowing such a woman a loose on the Canal Zone, where the presence of 20,000 troops in itself is sufficient to brake any uprising, and our Government allowing such a woman to enter a Central American country inadequately policed, and where the respect for the British Government on the part of the Jamaicans is the only real control that exists over them. At a final show-down the Costa Rican Government can be counted on to do its best for law and order, but its best will only manifest itself after trouble has started and probably after many of both races, African and White, have been killed. If Washington can be persuaded to stop her progress through these countries, I believe it should be done.

Very truly yours,

[Unsigned, from G. P. Chittenden]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. F. CHITTENDEN
MANAGER

A. A. CATTERALL
ASST. DIVISION AUDITOR

CABLE ADDRESS
UNIFRUITCO (SAN JOSÉ)
LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION
LIMÓN, COSTA RICA

April 22, 1921.

Y. M. Cutter, Esq.,
Vice-President,
Boston, Mass.

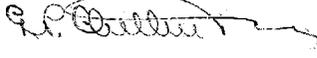
Dear Sir:

Marcus Garvey sailed for Bocas Thursday morning after three days of speaking in Limón and vicinity. The result of his speeches will be in general, favorable to our business. The meetings were largely attended but there were not so many people as was expected originally. Three or four Jamaicans, resident in Costa Rica, had been groomed by their followers to attack Garvey in the meetings, demanding financial statements of his various enterprises and show him up in general. The best one of these lasted five minutes.

After all Garvey was the most conservative man of any attending the meetings. He told them they should not fight the United Fruit Company, that the work given them by the United Fruit Company meant their bread and butter and that they would not only deserve but receive the same respect as the United Fruit Company, once they had farms, railways and steamships of their own and showed that they could operate them. He said that in order to operate such an enterprise they must have money and that in order to get money they had to work. I know that at one meeting two scrap baskets and one suit case full of United States gold notes were collected (Garvey announced that he would receive nothing but U.S. currency in contributions). I know that at another meeting he stood beside a pile of gold notes which reached above his knees. It is impossible to estimate the amount collected but it might easily be as much as \$50,000.00, all of which he took away with him in cash.

Mr. Barnett of the Federación de Trabajadores, endeavored to start a counter attraction during Garvey's stay here. He made no impression on the populace. All together we are very well satisfied with the results of the visit and can only wish the Panama Division the same luck as walked with us. I enclose Mr. Barnett's circular covering his counter attraction.

Very truly yours,



cc H.S. Blair, Esq.

FIGURE 1 Internal memo, United Fruit Company.

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. P. CHITTENDEN, MANAGER

A. A. CATTERALL, ACTG. DIVISION AUDITOR

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, SAN JOSÉ, LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION

LIMÓN, COSTA RICA

April 22, 1921.

V. M. Cutter, Esq.,

Vice-President,

Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

Marcus Garvey sailed for Bocas Thursday morning after three days of speaking in Limon and vicinity. The result of his speeches will be in general, favorable to our business. The meetings were largely attended but there were not so many people as was expected originally. Three or four Jamaicans, resident in Costa Rica, had been groomed by their followers to attack Garvey in the meetings, demanding financial settlements of his various enterprises and show him up in general. The best one of these lasted five minutes.

After all Garvey was the most conservative man of any attending the meetings. He told them they should not fight the United Fruit Company, that the work given them by the United Fruit Company meant their bread and butter and that they would not only deserve but receive the same respect as the United Fruit Company, once they had farms, railways and steamships of their own and showed that they could operate them. He said that in order to operate such an enterprise they must have money and that in order to get money they had to work. I know that at one meeting two scrap baskets and one suit case full of United States gold notes were collected (Garvey announced that he would receive nothing but U.S. currency in contributions). I know that at another meeting he stood beside a pile of gold notes which reached above his

knees. It is impossible to estimate the amount collected but it might easily be as much as \$50,000.00, all of which he took away with him in cash.

Mr. Barnett of the Federacion de Trabajadores, endeavored to start a counter attraction during Garvey's stay here. He made no impression on the populace. All together we are very well satisfied with the results of the visit and can only wish the Panama Division the same luck as walked with us. I enclose Mr. Barnett's circular covering his counter attraction.

Very truly yours,

[Signed by G. P. Chittenden]

cc H. S. Blair, Esq.

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. P. CHITTENDEN, MANAGER

A. A. CATTERALL, ACTG. DIVISION AUDITOR

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, SAN JOSÉ, LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION

LIMÓN, COSTA RICA

April [Date illegible] 1921.

PERSONAL

Dear Blair:

Referring to letters between you and Mr. Doswell, dated April 16th and 17th, in the matter of Marcus Garvey. Mr. Garvey made a long call on me in San José the day before yesterday. If he keeps his word he will make no trouble; but the policy originally initiated by you of not entering into any discussion, is beyond doubt the best one to follow.

Garvey impressed me as something mean to debate with. He has no rules at all. However, if you play up to his vanity a little, and talk to him the way you would talk to one of your own laborers with whom you were on extra good

terms, you will have no trouble with him. This is said long before he leaves, and I may be wrong, but it is the way I size up the matter right now.

He states that he too is an employer of labor, understands our position, is against labor unions, and is using his best behavior to get the negro race to work and better themselves through work.

Supposing you take this as my final size-up. If I have anything else to add I will send it by special messenger.

Garvey expects the "Antonio Maceo," his yacht, to arrive in Bocas on Sunday and will, therefore, not require transportation back to Limon. That is, he has not engaged transportation here and therefore will have to come after anyone else in case he changes his mind.

I confirm what Mr. Doswell said on the 17th, to the effect that it would be well to handle him on the "Preston" if you can possibly see your way to do so. We have made him pay for all train service here at special rate which covers the cost of handling, and a bit over. Do you want us to collect in advance for the "Preston?" If so, how much?

Very truly yours,

[Signed]

G. P. Chittenden

cc V. M. Cutter, Esq.

[Handwritten note] *We shall expect you to cancel ball game anytime you see fit. Are you coming over and is Mrs. B coming [referring to a social gathering]. We expect you both are.*

[On letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. P. CHITTENDEN, MANAGER

A. A. CATTERALL, ACCOUNTANT

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, SAN JOSÉ, LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION

LIMÓN, COSTA RICA

August 4th, 1922
H. S. Blair, Esq.,
Division Manager,
Almirante, R. P.
PERSONAL

Dear Sir:

Recently Santiago Chamberlain made a trip to Puerto Castilla on the *Semper Idem*, a rather appropriate ship for such a man. What is the reason for the fatal attraction you and Bennett seem to feel toward him?

Anyway, he went to Puerto Castilla as I stated above, and while there made tentative arrangements to run Jamaican laborers from Limon to that point. This, as you may know, is against the law of Honduras. As soon as he made the arrangements he seems to have dropped over to Truxillo and spilled all the beans in every saloon in town. Naturally those left out of the arrangement are now laying for Santiago. He then returned to Limon,—he and his partner, killing his partner's wife on the way down by neglect and sea-sickness, and as soon as he got here made himself conspicuous [*sic*] and objectionable to everybody, talking along the lines of his having made arrangements with the Truxillo Railroad Company that was shortly going to make him a millionaire, and that Julio Acosta could go to Hell, etc. etc. This rather sets the stage for any preventive measures the Costa Rica Government may care to take.

The day before yesterday I received the following telegram from Mr. Brown:

“Albert should arrive at your port 8th for birds,—refer to your telegram July 29th, ship 20,000 pounds coffee; if unable to fill entire order substitute black beans, ship 100 pounds honey, 50 Gonzalez cheese.”

to which I replied as follows:

“Refer to your telegram of August 2nd. Loose talk of Chamberlain here makes bird traffic absolutely dangerous for the present. Am positive consequences would be serious for you and embarrassing to me. Will take care of your merchandise orders if you decide to send schooner.”

[End of page 1 of letter]

[On letterhead, continued]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, 131 STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

G. P. CHITTENDEN, MANAGER

A. A. CATTERALL, ACCOUNTANT

CABLE ADDRESS: UNIFRUITCO, SAN JOSÉ, LIMÓN

COSTA RICA DIVISION

LIMÓN, COSTA RICA

August 4th, 1922

H. S. Blair, Esq.,
(#2 Cont.)

Yesterday I sent him the following telegram:

“Do you own schooner Albert? If I can arrange for birds trip Bocas to Puerto Castilla, am considering putting De Leon in charge of collecting birds. Would this be acceptable to you? How many birds can schooner carry in one trip conveniently? Can you make all necessary arrangements at your end?”

It occurs to me that you and I might be able to assist the Truxillo Railroad Company by making it easy for De Leon to recruit men around Almirante or Bocas and take them up, saw twenty or thirty at a time. I think that De Leon would be able to pull several men away from here to Almirante, and then pull them through Almirante onto his schooner and thence to Puerto Castilla. I also think the available supply might be increased if you became a little more active in your recruiting on the Canal Zone.

I am coming down to see you next week and want to go into this matter very fully in order that we may help them out at Puerto Castilla. Their labor situation seems to be indeed serious, and I imagine they need all the help they can get. The cost of doing this work does not need to scare you or me. I remember that I was once in the same position, and the cost per head of a Jamaican landed in the port was the smallest consideration of all. Naturally any expense that we go to can be charged against the Truxillo Railroad Co.

Very truly yours,
[Signed]
G. P. Chittenden

[Handwritten note] *The big idea would be to let DeL [labor contractor De Leon] appear to be doing this for his own account*

c.c. V. M. Cutter, Esq.
W. E. Brown, Esq.

[Carbon copy, not on letterhead]

Almirante, Panama
March 11, 1954

Mr. Franklin Moore
Boston

Dear Mr. Moore:

I refer to your letter of March 2nd, about getting some labor from Honduras to speed up the development program and at the same time stabilize our labor force.

I do not know if you had seen my letter of February 27th, about Mr. Holcombe's talk with the President when you wrote your letter of March 2nd, but presumably you had not. I do not think there is a chance of importing labor into this country at the present time. Bill Mais is on the YAJQUE, returning from vacation and gets in here Saturday. I will talk to him about this and ask him to inquire discreetly when he gets back to the city but I feel pretty sure he will confirm my opinion.

For some time now we have been bringing in San Blas Indians in groups of twenty five and at the present time have approximately 225 of them working. The drawback with these Indians is that they can only remain six months and must then return and be replaced by a new group. This arrangement was made with one of the principal "caciques" and he would not permit that any one group remain for more than six months. They are good workers, are well disciplined and have helped to relieve the shortage of the labor very consider-

ably. They have been exceptionally good in railway section gangs and of the groups here now about half of them are working in the section gangs, and the other half are split between bananas and cacao on the Panama side. They are quick to learn and cause absolutely no trouble. Even though they are obligated to return after six months, I feel that a lot of them will eventually work their way back as they are making good money here and from appearances, at least, seem to be contented.

In addition to the San Blas Indians we are getting some labor from Chiriqui.

As usual, we are very short of housing and even though a permit could be obtained we could not handle any sizable group of Hondurans and I do not want to cancel the arrangement for the San Blas labor, as they are working out exceptionally well and eventually I believe we shall have a good number of them here on a permanent basis.

Within the last couple of weeks we have brought in some 150 laborers from Guanacaste for the Costa Rica side cacao farms and are getting these farms cleaned up nicely. We are also getting in touch with a construction foreman who worked for Mr. Bishop in Quepos, and hope to have a good sized construction gang located on the Costa Rica side shortly to start work repairing the camps which have been crying for attention.

We are in better shape for labor today than we have been for a long time.

Very truly yours,

[Signed]

G. D. Munch

cc: Mr. Hartley Rowe

Mr. J. R. Silver

Mr. V. T. Mais

[On letterhead]

REV. E. S. ALPHONSE

SUPT. METHODIST CHURCH

BOCAS DEL TORO AND VALIENTE MISSION

BOCAS DEL TORO

REP. DE PANAMA

[Initialed by UFC officials]

[Handwritten note] *I talked a long time to him and he is quite cooperative.*

The Management C. L. Co.

July 26th 1954

Sir,

I have just drawn up a plan of Campaign to take place among the Guaimie Indians working along the lines. This Campaign I intend to carry out with Jesse the Indian we have at Base Line under my guidance. I shall be depending on you for transportation in order to do an effective work. I take with me my lantern or Projector so that I can have visual aid in order to inculcate in their minds the things we want them to know. To use this effectively I must take my 12 volt battery to places such as Dos Caños where there is no electric current. I write this in duplicate so that Mr. Flores can arrange through you to put a car at my disposal to reach the Indians and bring me back to my base night after night. I also ask that the foremen be notified to make them aware of the time of gathering together especially for the mass meeting to be held at Guabito on Sunday Aug. 8th at 2 P.M.

Plan of Itinerary

Wed. Aug. 4th.: Elena & Dos Caños Indians to meet at Dos Caños (Using flat car and trailer ?) Subject to your existing plan of organization.

Thurs. " 5th: Nievécito and Baranco

(Time for all these _7.P.M.)

Friday " 6th: Guabito and Long Range

Sat. " 7th: Base Line

Sunday " : Indians from Almirante, Rubber tree, Empalme Base Line, Elena, Dos Caños, Nievécito, Barranco, etc. etc. all to converge on Guabito to meet at 2 P.M. for a mass meeting.

I will come to Almirante early Wednesday the 4th to take up Projector and battery to Elena and Dos Caños. Travelling by my own launch to Almirante.

Points to Discuss with them

1. The damage licor [*sic*] is doing to them

2. The inconvenience to the Co. caused by their changing of their names as they go from farm to Farm.
3. The need to have a fixed name and if needs be fix up certificates for each one which must be kept and presented each time he is to be paid and when he asks for work.
4. To make complaints when they arrive only through the correct channel & at the Labour Office _ Where I take it that they will be patient enough to have the Indian grievance or case properly translated to him and to the Office. I now refer to Indian accidents, and death on the job whereby he leaves perhaps a young wife and children in the mountains orphaned and unprovided for a long time. Matters of this kind I venture to suggest are best dealt with through me interpreting _ And I shall be willing to give freely my services in their interest.
5. The harm that is done to the machinery of productive labour caused by Strikes. To Avoid Communist agitators.
6. Sanitation Recreation. (Organizing of an Indian Base ball team) To ask the Mangement [*sic*] to withhold [*sic*] part of their earnings til they are leaving for home. To specify a shorter period for releasing them to go home to attend to their crops since the country becomes impoverished by the diminishing Indian Crops . . Corn, Yams, Rice, etc. The cream of labour being harnessed at this end.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed by E. Alphonse]

[Not on letterhead]

Guatemala, Guatemala

12 December 1957

Mr. G. D. Munch

Almirante. —

Dear Mr. Munch:

During my recent visit to Almirante I discussed with Mr. Richards the necessity for preparing a monthly earnings report on the daily and tarea workers,

showing average daily and monthly earnings, days lost and days worked. I believe such statistics are vitally important to your supervisors to keep them informed monthly of the earnings and time lost of their employees.

Mr. Richards makes up a monthly report showing the total payroll figures by departments which I do not think is adequate.

I understand that in the near future, the Accounting Department will be receiving a new IBM unit on which a very detailed report on earnings, days lost etc. can be prepared. When this machine arrives and the report is prepared, copies should be furnished to all your department heads. I would appreciate receiving copies also.

The so-called unrest among your Indian labor which you told me about and that you say does not exist should be closely watched as you say there are some unscrupulous outside labor leaders who are endeavoring to gain control of the Indians. On two occasions, I tried to talk to the Indians on the farms but I was not very successful and could not get them to answer my questions. If the Padre who has the confidence of the Indians and whom you requested to visit the banana zone to investigate the so-called Indian unrest develops anything on his trip, I would like to hear what he had to say.

I was very favorably impressed with the Secretary General of the Union, although as I advised you having a Union officer in an important position in your Labor Relations Department does not look good as people will not be able to understand how such a person can look after the interests of the workers and the Company. The Union is doing a good job in running night schools for the workers and I was told by the Secretary General with whom I had a long talk that the Union was paying for the teachers out of Union funds.

I was very much impressed with Jorge Rivera, the Labor Conciliator, who appeared very energetic, capable and had a very good knowledge of all phases of the operation. He apparently gets along well with the labor and the supervisors, which is a good sign.

We visited several of the schools, commissaries and dispensaries. The rice being sold in the commissaries was of poor quality and badly broken and deteriorated. The dispensaries were well stocked and the people in charge were neatly dressed. Supplies were adequate and good reports kept of the patients. [End of page 1 of letter; page 2, not transcribed, is signed by F. Moore.]

[Not on letterhead]

Medical Department
Almirante, Panama

December 18, 1957
Mr. G. D. Munch
Almirante

Dear Mr. Munch:

This is to advise that Chali Villagra Chio, 47 years, Guaimi Indian of Farm 61, was found to suffer from progressive blindness due to an extensive chorioretinitis in the left eye. The right eye has been blind for years.

He is no longer able to work. He was advised to return to Cricamola.

Yours very truly,
[Signed]
Dr. Gustav Engler

cc: Mr. D. K. Linton
Mr. J. Rivera
File 3.2.0

GE/lw.—

LABOR RELATIONS

[Carbon copy, not on letterhead]
[Handwritten note] *Strike—labor troubles*
Bocas del Toro,
April 16, 1920

Mr. H. S. Blair,
Manager, U.F.CO.
Panama Division
Almirante.

Dear Sir:

In compliance with your request to render you an accurate account, re the part played by E. Glashen, in connection with the labor disturbances which occurred amongst some of the people of the United Fruit Company in this division, beginning on December 2nd 1918, I respectfully beg to state as follows:

In the first place I have to inform you that Glashen, even to the most casual observer, would appear to belong to that class of people who suffer from the disease known as "cacoethes loquenti," men who always want to say something, who profess to know all, except the proper thing, viz: a knowledge of how much they really do know.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the disturbance in reference, spread and flourished through Glashen's agitation and predomination. The occurrence to every right minded person was looked upon, not as a labor strike, because strikes generally are an organized affair, having as its definite aim the amelioration of conditions, etc. but as a violent disturbance, an uproar, calculated to throw into a state of confusion the Company's operation here, while, from the many criminal acts committed, embarrassing the Governments and their own diplomatic representatives, finally embarrassing their own selves, because the majority of them had not [one] cent to go by two days after the thing began. On the morning after the first day of the disturbance a large number of these soi-disant strikers from the one mile camps, armed with sticks marched down to the Company's machine shop, located at Half Mile, and violently introducing themselves therein, they at once started to throw water on the different engines that were in operation at the time, and also attacking the few men who did not join them and were at work. Later on the same day, about 9 A M a dense crowd, about 400 men, again armed with sticks and stones was formed on the railroad track at One Mile, and they were determined not to allow any Company's vehicles to pass through. An attempt at wrenching out the rails was made, and it was right there that the Panama Police made the first arrests. About 40 men were taken up and 40 sticks collected from them too.

The shooting of white men with buck shot from guns from behind, the beating of foremen, the chopping down of the Company's young cacao trees, the burning down of the Commissary and camp, the opening of railroad switches, etc. etc. continued with unabated fury, while Glashen kept on particularly busy;

conducting mass meetings, which took place almost daily at Guabito; and despatching [*sic*] here and there his agents to carry the news of his determination to conquer. Glashen's agents were chiefly persons like himself who did not work for the Company, but meddlesome outsiders, Gamblers, speculators, impostors and all such who love to stay at home and maliciously plan as to how to live on the hard earned wages of the workingman. Some of the agents in reference were, Forbes, Alais sugar well known gambler — Jack Collins, professional gambler at the time, Samuda, Gambler, Jeweller, and so forth.

At a mass meeting, held in the open air at Guabito, about 8 PM December 12th of the same year above mentioned it was indeed sorrowful to hear some of Glashen's utterances. I say sorrowful because he was simply leading a poor unfortunate people, his own race and my own race too, astray. Converting an empty barrel into a platform, or pulpit, and mounted like a hero he addressed the crowd, among which he distinctly said:

“Friends, countrymen, I am your leader, and God has sent me to rescue you. Do you remember what the white man told us during the war that we were fighting for democracy, equality[,] and therefore to become free subjects? Do you realize your present position, which is a white man is getting four to five hundred dollars per month? Do you get that much in cents in a week? Is this equality? I ask you all to stand by me and consequently we will get what we want. I expect you not to go back to work. The white folks here are but a handful, and if they won't come to us, we shall compel them to fly away from here. If we could have given a good account of ourselves in the bloody war, why not here too. Why must we be afraid of the few white parasites around here. we will teach them a lesson for life, etc. etc.”

The crowd accordingly clapped him up, waved their handkerchiefs and in an unmistakable [*sic*] tone it resounded from them, “We shall murder them, we shall kill them” (Persons who can bear testimony to the fact are Emiliano Selles, Adam Arias, E. Thomas).

This sort of meeting at which Glashen presided, and with his characteristic inflammatory [*sic*] speeches incited the people to violence, went on for days. The arrival of the Governor of Port Limon to Bridgefoot (Costa Rican Territory) put an end to the matter because Glashen crossed over and demanded an interview with him, at which he spoke so very much, saying so many incriminatory things, that the Governor thought he was the fittest man to have taken

to Port Limon, reinvestigation of the atrocities that were being committed by the people on the Costa Rican side, he was conducting.

A certain letter signed by Glashen and Samuda addressed to Mr. J. M. Keyes, the then Manager, was also handed over to the Governor. This letter was self explanatory. It contained such incriminating passages that only a madman would thus write.

On the whole I find that Glashen's conduct was of the most perverse nature, he deliberately lent a deaf ear to the good counsel of respectable people, such as, Ministers of the Gospel etc. He persisted in doing wrong, he proclaimed a consistent policy and did not deviate, he sowed the seeds of whirlwind and he could not conscientiously expect, but to reap the fruits of whirlwind. In conclusion as the information might reach further, and as it might be said that nothing else could be expected of me, an employee of the Company, I wish to call attention once more to my motto, which I hold is based on truthfulness, straightforwardness etc. This being so, either I should have no fear to [t]ell you Mr. Blair, (My boss) that to a certain extent, I.E. so far as I sympathized with the people but could not for a minute close my eyes and deny the Company what is expected of me. Here again I must follow my identical course and every word herein said I feel it would never act as a remorse of conscience on me.

Very respectfully.

[Unsigned]

[Carbon copy, not on letterhead]

MEMORANDUM

March 8, 1929

The attached photograph shows five of the principal leaders in the recent disturbances in the Colombian Division. Their names are as follows:

[Check mark] No. 1. Bernadino Guerrero

No. 2. Nicanor Serrano

No. 3. P. M. del Rio

No. 4. Raúl Eduardo Mahecha

[Check mark] No. 5. Erasmo Coronel

peared completely and it is now reported in the press that he has escaped to Costa Rica.

Att. — photograph

[On carbon copy letterhead]

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY
GENERAL OFFICES, ONE FEDERAL STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ARTHUR A. POLLAN, GENERAL MANAGER
TROPICAL BANANA DIVISIONS

CIRCULAR NO. B-21

November 15, 1929

TO BANANA DIVISION MANAGERS

I am attaching a photograph for the purpose of familiarizing you with the appearance of Manuel Calix Herrera. He is the figure outlined in the center. This man is an agitator of the worst type; anti-American, extremist, given to writing and preaching Red, Bolshevist, and Communistic propaganda. He has recently been the principal organizer of a Bolshevist move originating on the north coast of Honduras. It is possible that as his activities have been restricted in that country, he will move to other fields, and you should be on the lookout for him.

His description is as follows:

Single

24 years of age

Native of Olancho, Honduras

Height about 5'10"

Weight, about 125 lbs.

Very slightly stooped

Eyes, grey

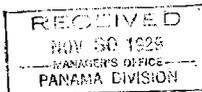
Color, white

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES, ONE FEDERAL STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ARTHUR A. POLLAN
GENERAL MANAGER
TROPICAL BANANA DIVISIONS

CIRCULAR NO. B-31



November 15, 1929.

TO BANAMA DIVISION MANAGERS

I am attaching a photograph for the purpose of familiarizing you with the appearance of Manuel Calix Herrera. He is the figure outlined in the center. This man is an agitator of the worst type; anti-American, extremist, given to writing and preaching Red, Bolshevik, and Communist propaganda. He has recently been the principal organizer of a Bolshevik move originating on the north coast of Honduras. It is possible that as his activities have been restricted in that country, he will move to other fields, and you should be on the lookout for him.

His description is as follows:

Single
34 years of age
Native of Mancho, Honduras
Height about 5'10"
Weight, about 125 lbs.
Very slightly stooped
Eyes, gray
Color, white
Hair, dark brown
Smooth-shaved
Small mouth
Complexion, pale, as if suffering from some ailment
Is quick and alert, and rapid in his movements
Usually dresses without coat or necktie, and a straw hat, with one side turned down in a rakish fashion.
Personal habits: drinks occasionally, sometimes to excess, given to frequenting low resorts.

Yours very truly

Enclosure

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. A. Pollan". Below the signature is a horizontal line.

FIGURE 3 Internal memo, United Fruit Company.



FIGURE 4 Photograph of Manuel Celix Herrera, accompanying internal memo, United Fruit Company.

Hair, dark brown

Smooth-shaved

Small mouth

Complexion, pale, as if suffering from some ailment

Is quick and alert, and rapid in his movements

Usually dresses without coat or necktie, and a straw hat, with one side turned down in a rakish fashion.

Personal habits: drinks occasionally, sometimes to excess, given to frequenting low resorts.

Yours very truly,

[Signed by A. A. Pollan]

Enclosure

[Not on letterhead]

Almirante, Panama

June 18, 1957.

Mr. G. D. Munch:

Attached please find memorandum from Rene Du-Bois, president of the "Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Chiriquí Land Company División de Bocas."

The annual meeting was held at the Empalme Stadium to elect the new board of directors for 1957. There was an attendance of approximately 800 members of the syndicate. The same board of directors was re-elected unanimously. The only changes were two directors who resigned for personal reasons.

The syndicate under the guidance of Rene De-Bois and Modesto Guerra did a fine job during the past year. This division has not had any labor trouble and this is at least due to close cooperation with the syndicate.

During the year they spent out their own funds over \$1500.00 in sports equipment which was turned over to the labor teams in all farms. Sport programs have been started and are giving good results. All farms have base-ball, soft-ball, boxing and volley-ball teams.

On June 6th 1957 night classes was started at Farm 21 school for indian labor with an attendance of 25 pupils. Teachers and school material is being furnished by the labor syndicate.

The Governor from Bocas has been trying to sometime to form an indian syndicate. On the syndicate election day they tried to boycott the meeting by having one at the Catholic Club at Base Line, sponsored by the Rev. Dogorthy and two indians from Chiriqui. I have been informed that these two indians Vicente Palacios and Salinas were expelled from Armuelles three years ago for agitating [an] indian strike. As I do not have definite proof that these are the same men I am still investigating and will inform you of new developments. This syndicate is supposed to collect two dollars monthly from each indian and claim they are going to use these funds in the construction of churches and schools in the Cricamola area. I do not believe they will prosper but all precautions are being taken by the Du-Bois organization to try and break it up.

Very truly yours,

[Signed]

J. Rivera

[Carbon copy, not on letterhead]

80 Federal Street
Boston 10, Massachusetts

December 12, 1958

CIRCULAR NO. T-44

CONFIDENTIAL

All Tropical Division Managers:

On Tuesday, December 9, Mr. Redmond, Al Giardino, Jasper Baker and I had a long conference with State Department Deputy Under Secretary Robert Murphy and other high officials in the State Department.

The State Department representatives were obviously disturbed by the bad relations between ORIT and the United Fruit Company and stated that they considered the free labor movement, as well as American business itself, to be essential arms in the fight against communism. Several examples of indiscreet acts on the part of Company employees were given. One was a statement by a "company official" that "our fight with ORIT is a fight to the finish." Another was an episode wherein a member of our Costa Rica public relations department sent a set of clippings to Salvador on the reaction to the McClellan incident with a suggestion of action.

In this short letter I cannot give the details of all of the matters discussed, but our case was adequately presented. Giardino properly summed up our objection to ORIT as due to the complete irresponsibility of ORIT leaders. He listed many speeches, published articles, and acts by these people which have bitterly antagonized our people. The State Department people were told that being accused of favoring communism evidently causes resentment and anger on the part of United Fruit Company personnel and we were surprised that there were not many more intemperate statements and acts.

However, the key of the matter, as explained by Mr. Redmond, is the desire on the part of the State Department and the United Fruit Company for a period of labor peace. We hope ORIT shares the view.

With that in mind, kindly instruct those of your employees concerned to be

careful not to further aggravate matters by careless and antagonistic acts and statements, noting that even private and “off-the-record” remarks when made to Embassy personnel are repeated.

The period of negotiation is over for the time being, and with it should pass the pressure tactics to which we have been subjected.

Yours very truly,

[Signed by A. L. Bump]

Copy to: Mr. A. A. Giardino

Mr. L. S. Greenberg

Mr. R. V. Howley (12)

NOTE

1. This letter from E. M. Black to General Omar Torrijos was originally written in Spanish:

Mi querido General Torrijos:

Fue en placer para mí recibir su carta personal por conducto del Honorable Shlomo Gliksberg.

Un cheque por \$25,000 está siendo objeto de entrega a usted por nuestro estimado Vice-presidente, Harvey Johnson, y por nuestros Gerentes en Panamá, en nombre de la United Fruit Company y su subsidiaria, la Chiriqui Land Company, como regalo a los niños de Panamá.

La causa que usted y su esposa defienden es en realidad de gran mérito y nos sentimos complacidos de ser parte en el esfuerzo de ustedes. Este regalo es símbolo de mutua cooperación y buena voluntad del Gobierno y pueblo de Panamá y las compañías.

Ruégole comunicar mis calurosos saludos al Excelentísimo Señor Presidente Lakas a quien tuve el placer de conocer durante su reciente visita a Nueva York.

Le ruego acepte mis mejores votos por su buena salud (translation mine).

Black committed suicide in 1975 when the press revealed that he had paid the president of Honduras, General Oswaldo Lopéz Arellano, \$1.25 million to lower the banana export tax in 1974.

NAMES CITED IN THE CORRESPONDENCE

Alphonse, E. S., Methodist minister, Bocas and Valiente division, 1950s.

Alvarado, T., administrator, farm 8, Bocas division, 1956.

Arias, H., attorney, UFC; subsequently president of Panama, 1919–1920s.

Baggett, S., vice-president, UFC, Boston, 1930s–1950s.

Bennett, G. S., superintendent of agriculture, UFC, Guabito district, Bocas division, 1910–1920s.

Black, E. M., president and owner, UFC, Boston, 1970–1975.

Blair, H. S., manager, UFC, Bocas division, 1910s–1930s.

Chittenden, G. P., manager, UFC, Limón division; subsequently responsible for all southern Central American operations, then vice president, Chiriqui Land Company, Boston, 1916-1940s.

Coombs, A. F., agent, UFC, Panama City, 1919.

Cutter, V. N., general manager, UFC, Central and South American department; subsequently vice president, UFC, Boston, 1915-1920s.

De Leon, [first name unknown], labor contractor, Central America, 1920s.

Diebold, C. W., assistant manager, UFC, Bocas division, 1949-1954.

Engler, G., director of the medical department, UFC, Bocas division, 1950s.

Garvey, M., leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, New York and Jamaica, 1910s-1920s.

Holcombe, R. A., manager, UFC, Armuelles division, 1950s-1960s.

Kyes, J. M., manager, UFC, Bocas division, 1912-1919.

McFarland, E. C., assistant to manager, UFC, Panama City, 1910s-1920s.

Mais, V. T. ("Bill"), agent, Chiriqui Land Company, Panama City, 1950s-1960s.

Moore, F., senior assistant vice-president, UFC, Boston, 1950s.

Mullins, E. attorney, UFC, San José, Costa Rica, 1910s.

Munch, G. D., manager, UFC, Bocas division, 1950s.

Myrick, G. A., manager, UFC, Armuelles division; subsequently manager, UFC, Bocas Division, 1940s-1950s.

O'Hearn, N. C., general agent, UFC, steamship service traffic department, 1910-1920s.

Pollan, A. A., general manager, UFC, Tropical Banana divisions, 1929; executive vice-president, UFC, Boston, 1943-1950s.

Phillips, D. O., agent, UFC, Cristobal Agency, Canal zone, 1924.

Richards, R., superintendent, UFC, Sixaola district, 1954.

Rivera, J., manager of labor relations, UFC, Bocas division, 1950s-1960 strike.

Smith, W. P., son-in-law of Bribri King (Francisco Saldaña), small farmer in Coroma, Talamanca, 1914.

Torrijos, O., general and commander, National Guard, Panama, 1960s-1970s.

Turnbull, W. W., manager, UFC, Tela Division, Honduras, 1950s.

BANANA WARS

Power, Production, and History in the Americas

EDITED BY STEVE STRIFFLER AND MARK MOBERG

Duke University Press Durham and London 2003

2003

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction, MARK MOBERG AND STEVE STRIFFLER 1

1 A Global Fruit

The Global Banana Trade, LAURA T. RAYNOLDS 23

Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption
of Export Bananas, 1800–1980, JOHN SOLURI 48

United Fruit Company in Latin America, MARCELO BUCHELI 80

2 Central and South America

One Hundred Years of United Fruit Company Letters,
PHILIPPE BOURGOIS 103

Responsible Men and Sharp Yankees: The United Fruit
Company, Resident Elites, and Colonial State in British
Honduras, MARK MOBERG 145

The Logic of the Enclave: United Fruit, Popular Struggle, and
Capitalist Transformation in Ecuador, STEVE STRIFFLER 171

“The Macondo of Guatemala”: Banana Workers and National
Revolutions in Tiquisate, 1944–1954, CINDY FORSTER 191

The Threat of Blackness to the Mestizo Nation: Race
and Ethnicity in the Honduran Banana Economy,
1920s and 1930s, DARÍO A. EURAQUE 229