board of auditors takes on the function of arbiters in the interpretation of rules, statutes, or decisions of the board of directors.

Another group of managers which is elected by the General Assembly is the work supervisors (*Capi Squadri*) who are elected to oversee different farm operations and are responsible to see that jobs are done efficiently and equipment is kept in working order. The supervisors are important people who are usually long time members. Sometimes the job is highly prized because it means more hours of work but sometimes the supervisors complain that in order to do a good job they have to put in extra unpaid hours as well since the number of hours they are supposed to work is limited.

Because the process of worker self-management necessarily occurs within the limitations posed by economic realities, the role of the hired director-manager and agricultural technician should not be underestimated. It is sometimes said that hired managers are put in the impossible position of bossing their employers, a fact which leads to a "my bag is always packed" attitude (Bellas, 1972:54). The Ravenna case is no different in that it is the job of the paid director to inform the elected board of directors and the general membership of the sacrifices which must be made in order to expand future employment and guarantee the continuity of the collective. They have to provide guidelines as to the limits at which the concern of members for immediate benefits and work might endanger the capital built up by past generations.
Far from being in an impossible situation, however, the managers of the Ravenna collectives regard their jobs as useful in bringing about social justice and change. They are personally dedicated as well as highly skilled graduates of agricultural schools who find it a challenge to use the utmost in modern know-how to enable the Ravenna collectives to stretch employment to the maximum without eroding capital built up over the years. One manager told me that he had been offered a much higher salary to work for a large private farm, but his feelings about the collectives were so strong that he didn't even consider it.

Managers of Ravenna's collectives have an informal friendly relationship with members and do not feel isolated from them as was the case of the managers of the worker-owned plywood companies studied by Bellas (1972:54). Moreover, managers receive considerable support from the strong provincial organization which provides technical assistance as well as opportunities for advancement and recognition in their careers. One of the most dedicated and personally most delightful members of the Provincial League of Cooperatives' staff in Ravenna was an agricultural technician named Dottore Guido Brighi. A local boy who went to study agriculture at the University of Bologna, he proved himself by working for four years in one of the weakest collectives of the province with good results, and then moved up in the hierarchy of the Lega where he now uses his talents advising all 33 of the red collectives.
As individuals, managers play an important part in the decision-making process which helps to insure that self-interest of groups or individuals within the collective does not prevail over the long range interests of the collective. Of course, they have no real power per se, but they rely upon their relationship with the members. The personality of the director appears to be an important factor. In one collective where the director was not particularly well-liked (incidentally, he was one of the few who was not educated but had risen from the ranks) he had an impossible time trying to convince members that they could not continue to expand the labor intensive crops without making new investments in capital as well as labor intensive crops. On another collective with a well-educated and enthusiastic director who happened to be the grandson of one of the founders of the first labor cooperatives in Ravenna (Nullo Baldini), the membership trusted his analysis and everything ran smoothly. One member remarked that:

When he (the director) can go home at five and wash his hands of our problems, he doesn't. He is here on into the evenings and even on Sundays. We don't even have to tell him how much we need to work. He knows already.

Decisions and Risks

A truly worker-managed enterprise could be defined as one in which the workers actually make decisions and take risks. Perhaps the most important decision the members of Ravenna's collectives make each year concerns the division of profits and the eternal question of how much should be left in the collective to allow it to grow and expand and how much can be divided among the members to satisfy their
immediate needs. At the General Assembly of each collective, members vote on the amount of the previous year's profits to be divided among themselves, to be accredited to each member in a deferred payment account, to be placed in the mutual aid fund, and to be allocated to the collective reserve over which the members have no claims as individuals. These decisions have far reaching effects on such things as jobs in the following years, the success of the collective, and immediate effects in terms of present income for the members. For people who work an average of only 100 days per year and make an average of only 1,000 USA dollars per year, the decision to forego 100 to 200 dollars of what could have been added to their income must be regarded as a substantial investment.

If a collective has an opportunity to purchase new land or if new machines or trees need to be acquired, members vote to take less that year. If there is no land nearby for sale, if the collective has an adequate amount of money in its' reserve, and if devaluation of currency is foreseen, a large amount of the profit will be divided immediately among the members. Table 24 illustrates the range of variation in the way in which profits were allocated on four collectives in 1973. Members of a growing collective such as the one at Carraie which had the opportunity to buy land and had to put in improvements on that land immediately, would vote to put most of the profits in the reserve fund and in the deferred payment fund. Money left in the deferred payment fund is accredited to individual members and repaid without interest on retirement. The collective of Lavezzola, on the other
hand, is much larger and more developed technologically with a safe amount of money in the collective reserve and no thoughts of buying or improving land in the immediate future, and 75% of the profits for 1973 were divided immediately among the members.

It would seem to be only logical that under such a system members who were old would naturally vote against long term investments. However, because the old people work less, less is taken out of their "wages" for investments. In addition, they might have sons or daughters who are voting for the long term investments. On the surface it seems puzzling that everything always runs smoothly and democratically on the red collectives while the same democracy on the Republican collectives leads to shrinking rather than expansion. This difference may partially be a result of good management on the part of the red collectives which proves over and over that the organization can achieve remarkable results in expanding employment during off seasons (the main goal of the braccianti class) if members will only follow the recommendations of the leaders and invest rather than divide up profits.

Apparently, however, members' long term interests are not always enough to insure that necessary investments will be made. One day, after months of discussions with the grandson of Nullo Baldini, I was let in on a secret. "What do you do when it is clear that the members are going to make a wrong decision?", he asked himself and then answered, "you fudge the figures a little bit". He added that sometimes the local union representative would even "appoint" some of the
board of directors which was supposed to be entirely elected by the members. Of course, I had no way of knowing how widespread this was, but it is safe to say that this sort of thing has probably been a factor in the success of the Ravenna collectives.

Even if such things did not occur, it could be argued that all the workers in a worker self-management system do is provide a rubber stamp for decisions that are really made elsewhere on a higher level and handed down as law. The members of Ravenna's collectives are themselves the first ones to admit that they "haven't studied" and wouldn't presume to tell the managers to grow beans when they might not even sprout. So, in a very important sense, they do depend upon decisions made elsewhere. But this by no means indicates that members don't participate in making important decisions. A typical way in which worker management is viewed by scholars is that the types of decisions and risks the workers make are so small as to just be a ploy on the part of those really in control (those who own the means of production) to increase production (Bellas, 1972:4). In some worker self-management situations, workers seem to be concerned only with irrelevant things like the placing of water coolers instead of management of the enterprise.

Although worker self-management in Ravenna may not be completely pure and unadulterated, members are actively involved in the decisions about each year's crop plan. Crops are divided into "active" ones which are profit makers for the collective and "passive" ones which absorb a great deal of labor, pay many hours of wages, but barely
break even or sometimes even lose collective money. Each crop has a specific peak period or periods which have to be arranged so as to spread employment and the allocation of land use is something which as a result is always being discussed and haggled over.

Contrary to many worker-management situations, there is a certain amount of risk the members take as a result of the decisions made. If the members insist on planting high labor cost, high risk, intensive products (such as fruits and vegetables), the collective may lose money and members may have to repay the collective out of advances made on their wages during the course of the year. An important indication that the members of Ravenna's collectives do take risks in this respect is the way in which they have expanded fruit production into marginal areas of the province. Braccianti in fact say that the large private owners are really the ones who don't take the risks. Comparative data from the worker-owned plywood firms in the Pacific Northwest substantiates this in that most began by taking over mills which were considered unprofitable (too risky) by private owners (Bellas, 1972: 20).

Prior to the General Assembly each year, the manager, technicians, and elected board of directors meets and develops a proposal. In informal evening gatherings in each neighborhood, the technician or manager and president of the collective meets with the neighborhood group and informs them of the costs of production (including union wages) of each crop, and the proposed crop plan is discussed. Here
is where objections and opinions on the part of the members are voiced, such as:

    If we begin using the new sugarbeet seed (which requires no manual thinning) then how will we eat this year?

    Why can't we put up another "tunnel" (of plastic) to grow more strawberries this year?

    How come we wasted land last year on those peppers that weren't even worth picking?

In these meetings, the agricultural technician is bombarded from all directions, especially by the young men members. The women members generally participated less in the haggling. One woman whispered to me that "the women will complain later among themselves but they won't say anything to the manager". One decision that many women did participate in was a proposal to set up lights in the field (an irrelevant "water cooler" decision?) so that they could work under the plastic in the evening when it was cooler the way small farmers often did. They also argued about the policy that only women can work in the strawberry fields, because some wanted their husbands to take their places on the job when they were sick.

Decisions about the crop plan, however, were definitely serious ones which affected the immediate income of the workers and the long range survival of the collective. It would seem that members would be opposed to the introduction to mechanization, insofar as it robs them of work and wages, but this was not the case. Mechanization of traditional extensive crops (grain, forage, sugarbeets) decreases wages to members but increases profit to the collective. A share in those
profits would not nearly replace the lost wages, but when those pro-
fits are used in certain ways, new sources of employment can be deve-
loped even during off seasons. Contrary to what is generally assumed,
capital intensive systems are not always non-labor intensive. Costly
greenhouses, irrigation and new fruit trees can be both capital inten-
sive and labor intensive. Members fully understand that their collec-
tives can increase the amount of labor used per hectare only by in-
creasing the amount of capital invested. Therefore, they vote for a
crop plan which will make full use of machines ("active" crops) in
addition to the maximum possible utilization of their own human
resources ("passive" crops).

The effectiveness of worker-management in Ravenna can be gauged
by several indicators reported in Tables 22-31. First, the effect of
technology on the Ravenna collectives in increasing rather than de-
creasing employment shows that worker self-management has been success-
ful in counteracting tendencies on large private farms to decrease
employment with the introduction of technology. Worker-management
definitely has something to do with the reason why collectives, with
9% of the province land provide 31% of the employment of the entire
braccianti class. Second, the amount of money taken home in wages by
members from the production of "passive" crops is a direct result of
the immediate desires of the workers expressed in the self-management
process. Third, the capacity of the Ravenna collectives to invest
indicates that worker self-management does not lead to an irrespon-
sible division of the society's assets.
Table 22. Relationship Between Labor Hours per Hectare and Machine Investments in Larga Red Collectives, 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Machine Investments Per Hectare</th>
<th>Labor Hours Per Hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$700</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from League of Cooperative data.
Table 23. Effect Upon Employment of the Introduction of a New Sugarbeet Seed in 1972, Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Piangipane

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>17,500</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Braccianti Cooperative of Piangipane.
Table 24. "Passive" Crops Grown on Red Collectives in Ravenna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Hours/Hectare</th>
<th>Gross Sales/Hectare</th>
<th>Collective Wages/Hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>1,144</td>
<td>$1,852</td>
<td>$1,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>$1,521</td>
<td>$ 990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>2,946</td>
<td>$3,480</td>
<td>$4,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>$2,963</td>
<td>$2,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celery</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepperoni</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another indicator of the effectiveness of worker management is the participation of the members in the meetings and assemblies. Although the Ravenna League of Cooperatives kept no exact records of participation, records kept by the League of Cooperatives of Bologna shows that slightly over a third of the members of agricultural collectives regularly attend meetings and assemblies (Fig. 32). In Ravenna, most of the serious work is done in numerous pre-assemblies; and, although I attended several of these, there were no figures on total attendance at all the meetings. By the time the actual assemblies rolled around, the occasion is festive and both members and guests are present, thus making a count difficult. I was of the impression that participation was much higher than the 35% reported by Picchi for the Bologna agricultural collectives.
Table 25. Balance Sheet of the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Ravenna, 1972
(Excluding Forage Crops Which are not Sold)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
<th>Hours/Ha.</th>
<th>Total Wages</th>
<th>Machine Costs</th>
<th>Profit Going to Workers, Deferred Payment, Mutual Aid, and Reserve Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>$ 35,991</td>
<td>$15,395</td>
<td>$ 25,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarbeets</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>$189,943</td>
<td>$32,948</td>
<td>$ 29,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,946</td>
<td>$13,080</td>
<td>$ 924</td>
<td>−$ 2,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>$ 8,871</td>
<td>$ 1,215</td>
<td>$ 2,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>$21,134</td>
<td>$ 5,064</td>
<td>$ 3,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>$45,368</td>
<td>$ 6,570</td>
<td>$ 17,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>$53,919</td>
<td>$42,854</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---$27,741---</td>
<td></td>
<td>$ 70,496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$146,404
($105 per Hectare)

*Some new vines. Sales of existing vines were $54,205.
Table 26. Land and Labor on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Bagnacavallo (Wages in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Hectares</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Hours/Ha.</th>
<th>Union Wages Paid</th>
<th>Above Union Wage/Hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>$149,259</td>
<td>$.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>$245,554</td>
<td>$.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>$257,595</td>
<td>$.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>$304,257</td>
<td>$.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>$214,627</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>$324,630</td>
<td>$.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>$388,704</td>
<td>$.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>$.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Exact figures on membership are not available, but the manager says there has been a steady decline.

Table 27. Distribution of Annual Employment of Braccianti in the Province of Ravenna, 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of Hectares</th>
<th>Days of Employment</th>
<th>Days/Hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Private Farms</td>
<td>38,651 (25%)</td>
<td>221,083 (11%)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Collectives</td>
<td>14,226 (9%)</td>
<td>617,000 (31%)</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (small farms, refrigerator and packing plants)</td>
<td>1,131,060 (57%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,969,143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Servizio Contributi Agricoli Unificati, Ravenna.
Table 28. Division of Profits as Decided by the General Assemblies of Four Collectives in 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>Divided Among Members</th>
<th>Deferred Payment</th>
<th>Mutual Aid Fund</th>
<th>Reserve Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carraie</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longastrino</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavezzola</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzano</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another indirect illustration of the importance and validity of the self-management process as it operates on the Ravenna collectives is that, although owners of large private farms in Ravenna often express the fear that the braccianti want to deprive them of their land, the braccianti say that if the landowners would let them share in the planning of investments and crop plans there would be no contesting of private ownership rights over land. To an American well steeped in the sacred principle of the inviolability of private property rights, this challenge by the braccianti to the landowners is kind of breath-taking. Much less, even a simple threat of strike, in days past brought out the American night riders to tar and feather similar troublemakers (McWilliams, 1969:219,242). Imagine if you will that not only did it not bring out any night riders in Ravenna, but the idea packed such a clout that, according to Maria Bassi, a very dynamic young woman union organizer, three hundred private farms in the province have already signed agreements with the worker's unions.
Table 29. Division of Income on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Lavezzola with 738 Hectares and 634 Members in 1970 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Income</td>
<td>$814,281</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Costs (fertilizer, feed, seed, fuel, machines, loans for acquiring and making improvements on land, maintenance of buildings, etc.)</td>
<td>$238,614</td>
<td>(29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leasing and Services</td>
<td>$13,647</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic and Garage</td>
<td>$17,795</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>$26,143</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$2,383</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Member Labor</td>
<td>$78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Expenses</td>
<td>$46,077</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on Capital Borrowed to Cover Advances, Expenses, etc.</td>
<td>$35,309</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members Labor at Union Wage (average per member of $466)</td>
<td>$295,750</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Profit</td>
<td>$138,485</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Division of Profit:

- Paid Immediately to Members (average $101 per member or 21¢/hour) | $64,144 | (8%) |
- Deferred Payment Account (average $70 per member or 14¢/hour)      | $44,343 | (5%) |
- Collective Reserve (average $33 per member or 7¢/hour)              | $20,924 | (3%) |
- Mutual Aid Fund (average $15 per member or 3¢/hour)                 | $9,907  | (1%) |

Source: Compiled from data provided by *dottore* Brighi, League of Cooperatives.
Table 30. Division of Profits on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Lavezzola, 1966, 1970, and 1972 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1966</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1972</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Sales</td>
<td>$607,824 (100%)</td>
<td>$814,281 (100%)</td>
<td>$1,088,519 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Profit</td>
<td>$58,737 (10%)</td>
<td>$138,485 (17%)</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid in Cash</td>
<td>$27,389 (62%)</td>
<td>$64,144 (46%)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Payment</td>
<td>$16,278 (38%)</td>
<td>$43,510 (31%)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Fund</td>
<td>$15,070 (26%)</td>
<td>$20,924 (15%)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Aid</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>$9,907 (7%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I believe this must have been included in the immediate cash payment.

Sources: Dottore Brighi, League of Cooperatives; and attendance at the 1973 General Assembly of the Lavezzola Collective, at which I was unable to ascertain the exact amount of profit for 1972.

which allow worker participation in productive decisions. The fact is that if the large land owners would bear the expenses of investment, the braccianti might prefer that they retain ownership. Braccianti thoroughly understand that it is the way that the land is used and not necessarily its ownership which is the basis of their security.
Table 31. Union Wages and Deferred and Immediate Payments Above Union Wage on 10 Ravenna Collectives, 1965-1969, and on all Red Collectives in 1971-1972 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hectares</td>
<td>6,828.17</td>
<td>6,889.45</td>
<td>6,921.38</td>
<td>7,201.03</td>
<td>14,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours Worked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,380,000</td>
<td>2,603,000</td>
<td>2,328,000</td>
<td>2,355,000</td>
<td>4,310,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Hectare</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Wage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,044,254</td>
<td>$2,202,806</td>
<td>$2,168,519</td>
<td>$2,220,872</td>
<td>$6,245,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Hectare</td>
<td>$299</td>
<td>$320</td>
<td>$313</td>
<td>$308</td>
<td>$439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Profit&quot; (after payment to reserve fund)</td>
<td>$410,863</td>
<td>$243,565</td>
<td>$102,167</td>
<td>$458,879</td>
<td>$1,481,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Hour</td>
<td>17¢</td>
<td>9¢</td>
<td>5¢</td>
<td>20¢</td>
<td>34¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Scale Paid Immediately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$226,926 (55%)</td>
<td>$122,048 (50%)</td>
<td>$55,111 (54%)</td>
<td>$278,809 (61%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Hectare</td>
<td>$33</td>
<td>$17</td>
<td>$8</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$183,937 (45%)</td>
<td>$121,517 (50%)</td>
<td>$47,056 (46%)</td>
<td>$180,070 (23%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Hectare</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$18</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*League of Cooperatives data for 1972 does not make an average of how much was paid immediately and put in the deferred payment fund.

Source: League of Cooperatives, 1969 research project, and 1972 summary of balance sheets of all red collectives.
Table 32. Attendance of Members in Collective Meetings in Bologna, 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agricultural Collectives</th>
<th>Agricultural Transport Collectives</th>
<th>Construction Collectives</th>
<th>Metal-Mechanic Collectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget Assembly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Participate</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Pre-Assembly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Participate</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Participate</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Picchi, 1968:142-144.
Division of Income

Karl Marx "opened a can of worms" as it were, with his labor theory of value. No matter what people think about Marx, he put his finger on the fact that people don't get paid for the value of what they produce under capitalism. The crux of Marxist theory is the idea that it is first and foremost labor which creates "value", and in their own intricate way, the collectives in Ravenna have developed a system of distributing the income of the collective in some ways in tune with this Marxist analysis, namely in recognition of the ultimate value of the labor contributed. The Ravenna system includes methods of generating the capital required for investments without allowing capital to predominate over the contribution of human effort. Also, methods (always on the basis of labor) have been developed for liquidating part of the capital accumulated over the years to members as they retire.

Although some of the red collectives do figure out how much money will be reinvested in the collective and how much will be divided among the members after arriving at the profit by subtracting all costs and considering union wages paid as a cost, the procedure of dividing income as outlined in the internal regulations does not even mention the word profit. The amount to be allocated to the reserve fund, the deferred payment, and mutual aid funds are supposed to be figured as percentages of the gross income.

Each year, according to the recommendations of the hired manager(s) and the board of directors, and the needs of the members, the
General Assembly first votes to place a certain percentage of the gross income in the reserve fund. It is out of this fund that the collectives in the past were enabled to make long term investments, guarantee loans, cover losses, make down payments, pay installments on loans for property, and maintain the property and machines. All gains or losses derived from the land and the sale of real estate have always remained in or been deducted from the collective reserve. However, because collectives no longer have a rigid method of accumulation and the members vote to place different amounts each year into the reserve, another method had to be developed for filling some of the important abovementioned functions of the reserve fund. That new method was created with the formation of the \textit{fondo di previdenza}, a deferred payment account which comes out of the share going to the workers but is accredited to each individual worker.

The share of the income going to the worker members is calculated in the following manner. After a certain amount is put into the reserve, the remaining gross income, plus the estimated increase in market value of animals, plants, improvements, and profits from the sale of old machines and moveable goods are credited to the members. The initial value at the beginning of the year of animals and plants, improvements, land, and the expenses for personnel and all other expenses of the collective, excluding taxes and including expenses for the small tools of the field and barn and the depreciation of buildings, machines, trucks, motorcycles, furniture and office machines are debited to the braccianti. In addition, braccianti are
financially responsible for the losses deriving from the sales of old machines, tools, and any other movable goods.

The internal regulations of the collective guarantee the payment of union scale wages to the braccianti year in and year out. This is done in order to meet the "competition" of the wages paid to farm-workers on the private capitalist farms. It is important to note that it was as a result of collective action that the private growers in Ravenna pay the highest agricultural wages in all of Italy. Collective farms, by offering a refuge to provide support and wages to braccianti during strikes on private land, aided the agricultural unions in their struggles. Secondly, as a protection against a depleted collective income in years of crop failures or other calamities, wages are paid to workers by taking out loans either from banks or the provincial cooperative organization to be repaid out of collective income for the following three years.

In normal years, compensation ("Socialist Wage" or wages plus profit sharing) is paid in two parts. Part is immediately paid to the braccianti members and another part, the amount of which has to be discussed and endorsed by the braccianti themselves, is put into an interest free account in the name of each member. The money goes into the deferred payment fund to be used by the collective, but each member carries around a precious little book (libretto) in which his or her individual payments to the fund are recorded. Formerly this was illegal because it provided a means for members to divide some of the collective capital. Now that it is no longer illegal, it is a
crucial part of the self-financing system of the Ravenna collectives. The deferred part of the payment is drawn when, in accordance with the provisions in the statute, a person is no longer a member or is disabled or cannot work anymore. Members can request the sum accredited to them if, at 65 years of age for men and 60 for women, they choose to stop work. This is an incentive to reduce the number of workers as their labor becomes less effective, but retirement is entirely voluntary. Members who are expelled lose the amount accredited to them, and it is allocated instead to the mutual aid fund. In the case of the death of a member, the deferred payment goes to his heirs.

The amounts to be assigned to the two parts of payment are established according to the procedure set forth in the internal regulations. The deferred part of the payment is figured out before the immediate payment. After expenses are subtracted and after voting to place a certain percentage of the gross income into the reserve fund and the mutual aid fund, the members vote to allocate a certain percentage of the remaining income to the deferred payment fund in accordance with the needs of the collective suggested by the manager and board of directors. This fund should be equal to all down payments and to the annual installments of loans for acquisition of land and works undertaken for improvements of the land plus a sum equal to the depreciation on the machines, tools, etc., and the down payments and installments on loans for the acquisition of these things. These stipulated reserved funds that the braccianti vote from their share
of the collective income can be paid in installments to this fund spread out over several years as would occur, for example, in the case of an opportunity to make a large purchase of land.

As explained to me on several occasions both by management and members, this deferred payment fund is a recognition that some part of the ever-increasing value of the collective should accrue to the individual members. The successful operation of the collective, due to the productivity of the workers, allows the collective to purchase more land and machines. In the case of machines, it is figured that by the time the collective finishes paying installments on a machine, it is obsolete or for some other reason has to be replaced by another one. Therefore, the individual members who have used the machines have lost nothing on their investment. Other items that the collective invests in, however, notably land and improvements on the land, go on producing opportunities for work long after the initial members have retired. The deferred payment fund enables members to be accredited with their share of the investment based upon the amount of labor contributed every time the collective makes a down payment or pays an installment on new land. Upon retirement, they draw their share of the initial investments, although any increase in market value upon the sale of a piece of land goes into the collective reserve and is not divided among the members.

The steady increase in value of collective holdings plus the effect of inflation means that members are only being repaid a fraction of the value of their contribution to the collective. There are
two main reasons why there is little resentment about this policy. The first is that the primary goal of the braccianti is expanding employment and they figure that their investments in the collective are remunerative in that respect. They appear not to be concerned with returns on their capital investments, only with returns on their labor. In a study of three collectives, Errani, et al., found that members who received below union wage for their work were reluctant to leave money in the collective whereas the reverse was true for those collectives in which members received above union wage (1955: 94). Secondly, members recognize that the largest part of the collective patrimony "belongs" to previous generations of cooperators, and the desire that these collectives continue to grow is widespread even today.

It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that if the increases in market value or at least a certain rate of interest were added to this deferred payment fund that it could become a yardstick of the true value of what each individual member has created by the sweat of his or her brow. I am not sure of the reason why payments to the collective reserve could not also be accredited to the individual members, but I believe that the law still requires the reserve to be maintained at some minimum level. Even as it exists today, the deferred payment fund in the Ravenna collectives is at least a beginning attempt to elevate labor from its status in most capitalist cultures as a mere market place commodity to the position of actual creator of wealth. To many, the denigration of the value of human
toil is a root cause of some of the problems in capitalist societies today. In those societies, the agricultural working class is usually on the lowest rung; and by contrast the profound appreciation of labor in the Ravenna collectives has resulted in a different social and cultural atmosphere characterized by intense personal pride and group esteem on the part of the Ravenna braccianti. Depending on the year and the decisions made, the average member might leave anywhere from $40 to $200 in the deferred payment account. Even if all the members of the red collectives only put $60 in the deferred payment account, the amount of cash generated in a year would be over a half million dollars.

The first part of the payment which is given immediately to the braccianti, then, is formed by what is left after the deferred payments are made, minus any advance payments on wages made in the course of the year. The rates of payment are different for different jobs according to union scale, and anything remaining in that fund after the payment of union scale is distributed also on the basis of hours and union qualification. This excess usually averages to about $.20-$30 per hour worked but can be more or less depending on the year. Averaging $200 per year, this small payment is 1/5 of the average braccianti income.

Part of the collective income is also allocated to provide for the payment of small pensions and disability payments which come out of the mutual aid fund. The mutual aid fund is formed in the same way as the reserve fund and the deferred payment fund, namely by the
vote of the members who allocate a certain percentage of the income to this fund. I was aware of one collective whose members allocated more to the mutual aid fund than was advised by the manager and board of directors, taking less pay for themselves.

Once the mutual aid fund is constituted, the members vote for a certain percentage to be used for the pension and disability payments and that amount is divided among the needful parties according to the number of hours each has worked in the collective over the years. It is the responsibility of the board of directors to keep track of the participation of members in the collective for the above purposes. The rest of the mutual aid fund is designated for ends intended to raise the quality of rural life which has lagged behind that of the city. Although the amounts of money involved are small, this was one of the original goals expressed by the first collectives in Ravenna. Money from this fund is used for education (purchasing of textbooks for children), tourist and cultural expeditions (such as trips to Yugoslavia), recreation, charity, day care centers, courses for worker specialization, maternity benefits, hospital transportation, contributions to the Italian red cross, aid to needy workers, and contributions for children's vacation homes. The day care center at the Piangipane, for example, was free to the members and took care of 30 children per day. Several collectives voted to allocate part of their mutual aid funds to purchase medical aid for North Vietnam.

Any braccianti who are not members but who work in the collective are not entitled to the profit sharing or deferred payments
received by members. The sum that ordinarily would be accredited to these workers if they were members is not distributed to the others but is placed in the mutual aid fund. Since all people who work on collective lands are invited to join, if a worker doesn't apply for admission, it is assumed that he/she has declined the offer and rejected the system of payment of the collective. Consequently, these workers are paid strictly according to union wage.

Capitalization and Financing

From an economic point of view, the main strategy of the collective is the maximum extension of labor intensive crops, ever-increasing expansion of the amount of land managed by the collective, full use of machines, and growing levels of investment. Collectives pay four times more per hectare in wages than private farms and they have to confront the problem of how to generate staggering amounts of capital in order to fulfill their social purpose of widening employment in the rural area. As a result of the rapid mechanization occurring in the period of 20 years from 1949-1969, the amount of land and capital required to provide full employment for one braccianti has multiplied three and four times respectively (Viaggi, 1969:135). Even though braccianti numbers have sharply declined over the same 20 years, the need for land and capital has continued to rise. If a collective were a joint stock company in which income were distributed on the basis of capital shares contributed, it would have less trouble in getting working capital. Decisions to augment the reserve would cause no hardship for the stockholders who have chosen to invest,
probably don't need the money anyway, and would eventually benefit. In some respects, a collective is more like a family enterprise in which capital investments must come directly from "profits" rather than outside capital shares. However, the collective differs from the family enterprise in that the members of a collective leave their estate to future members of their socio-economic class rather than to their own individual families.

As a result of the particular economic organization of collectives, the only sources of capital accumulation available to them are:

1. Member's contributions
2. "Profits" after the worker-members are paid whatever they decide should be their "wages"
3. Subsidies from state and private entities
4. Fiscal and financial concessions available to collectives

Perhaps one of the most exceptional characteristics of the Ravenna collectives is that they survive and thrive in the midst of a chaotic capitalist economy without any substantive support from a central government. Although the 30 year loans made to collectives cannot be considered direct subsidies, collectives in 1966 benefitted from a five year program that was part of the Green Plan I. This plan provided special loans for acquiring land, making improvements, operating expenses, and technological improvement of the farms. If
the assistance provided braccianti collectives in Ravenna (3 million dollars in loans per year for five years) were divided up according to the number of braccianti who benefitted, the amount per individual (approximately $212 per year) would be much lower than the financing provided to each individual family farm by the same plan. It is for this reason that braccianti often resent the small farmers, accusing them of taking a government loan intended to improve agriculture and using it instead to build themselves a new home. Whatever the amount of government loans provided to Ravenna's collectives, taxpayers can be assured that it goes directly into improving the nation's agriculture.

Although collective farms in Ravenna have received some subsidies, the fact that they have financed the greater part of their acquisitions of land through ordinary credit indicates that they are financially sound. No bank has ever lost a single lira on money loaned to collectives in Ravenna. Guarantees for loans have come from the strong Federation of Cooperatives, a nearly hundred year old land owning entity which was formed by the first generation of cooperators who reclaimed swamps and acquired over 4,000 hectares of land. Some of this land was purchased from semi-public entities with help from the state, but it must not be forgotten that at the time of its acquisition it was nearly worthless. Recently, however, a large piece of that land, located on the coast, was sold to developers for a tourist center, and the money from that went into a great many cooperative investments.
Contributions by members directly to the collectives have been minimal in building up the capital reserves of Ravenna's collectives, although members do loan their personal savings (of up to $2,000 per family) to their local collectives at slightly higher than the prevailing rate for savings. Until recently, this practice, called "autofinancimento" or "self-financing", was illegal but was done anyway.

In economic terms, "profit" and devaluation of currency have been the two major sources of accumulation responsible for the extraordinary success of collective farming in Ravenna. In the first quarter of the century, as collectives acquired land of scarce monetary value and members poured their labor gratis into the land, large amounts of capital were accumulated. One purely economic way of looking at the success of collective farming in Ravenna might be that accumulation has taken place at the expense of what could have been wages. The willingness of members to sacrifice part of their wages to their collectively-owned and operated enterprises obviously is in part a result of chronic and widespread partial unemployment in Ravenna. That the desperate need for work even at below union pay is a factor here is a pitiful comment upon the sad state of the Italian economy.

Membership and Participation

A tour of the lands farmed by the Mezzano collective shows immediately that the system of cultivation is highly diversified and is conducted in an undivided manner. Groups of women workers on hands and knees seem to be silent as they move quickly along rows of
Table 33. The Piano Verde (Green Plan), 1966, Assistance to Braccianti Collectives (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land (620 Hectares)</td>
<td>$1,016,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Loan</td>
<td>532,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>145,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machines (5 Year Loan)</td>
<td>1,640,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Expenses (5 Year Loans)</td>
<td>12,052,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Animals and Loans to Members</td>
<td>520,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$15,906,966</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Cooperazione Ravennate*, 1966, n. 4, p. 234-245.

---

Table 34. Guarantees for Loans by the Federation of Cooperatives, Various Cooperatives, and Other Cooperative Organizations, 1964-1968 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1964</th>
<th>1968</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Federation</td>
<td>$434,259</td>
<td>$318,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation, Various Cooperatives, and Cooperative Organizations</td>
<td>$637,370</td>
<td>$625,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35. Financing of the Ravenna Cooperative Movement (Agricultural and Extra-Agricultural Activities), 1966-1972 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Investments Made by Ravenna's Cooperative Movement</td>
<td>$14,853,518</td>
<td>$37,529,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Government Subsidies</td>
<td>$ 107,037</td>
<td>$ 1,542,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Subsidized Loans</td>
<td>$ 4,559,629</td>
<td>$11,607,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Financing</td>
<td>$10,186,851</td>
<td>$24,379,629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cooperazione Ravennate supplement, April 1973, p. 6.

Table 36. Financing on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Ravenna, 1969-1971 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>$22,626</td>
<td>$34,660</td>
<td>$ 49,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Payments by Members</td>
<td>$28,796</td>
<td>$90,055</td>
<td>$134,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Aid</td>
<td>$27,777</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Braccianti Cooperative of Ravenna.

sugar beets, taking no notice of the visitors. On another piece of land, men drive their flatbed trucks slowly through the rows of peach trees, systematically pruning the branches to form a neat "Y" shaped pattern. Maintaining the drainage canals keeps a few men busy on the peripheries of the field. Other men in tractors prepare still another area for the planting of grain. There is lots of work to be done in
Table 37. Acquisition of Land by Ordinary Credit and Government Subsidized Loans by Red Collectives, 1969-1972 (in USA Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hectares Acquired</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Government Subsidized Loans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>$ 398,148</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>$ 657,407</td>
<td>$ 259,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>$2,229,630</td>
<td>$1,155,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>$2,537,037</td>
<td>$ 190,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,891</td>
<td>$5,822,222</td>
<td>$1,605,556</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cooperazione Ravennate supplement, April 1973, p. 15.

the greenhouse as well from picking the fat hot house strawberries experimented with for the first time this year to caring for seedlings that will be sold to small private farmers or planted next year on the collective lands.

Work is done in squads, supervised by a Work Supervisor who is elected by the Assembly. Sometimes the Supervisor is an old man with arthritis whose job is to supervise the others. An estimate is made of the amount of time a job should take per hectare and squads vary in size accordingly. In the case of the women, one woman known to be a fast worker will be placed in each squad, since they have found that the quickest worker in each group sets the pace for the others. Nobody wants to be left behind because that means being left out of the jokes and gossip that make the work bearable; but, as the anthropologist found out, if you skip a few strawberries in order to catch
up with the others, it is bound to be discovered by the Supervisor who tells you that it is better to go slower and pick the fruit carefully since it sells for 2,000 lire a kilo and "we" need the money. If a woman is slow but careful, another who is quicker will help her with her row so that all can move along at the same pace. All fruit is put into large boxes at the end of each row, which seems to be a much quicker and more efficient system than the practice on large private farms wherein each worker keeps her own boxes separate from all the others and is paid by the box.

In the case of the work done by the men, who generally work daily with farm machinery of one kind or another, it is the machine which is the pacesetter. To use a machine incorrectly could result in losing the privilege of using it. As a result, a man's relationship with these machines is a serious matter and they seem to take a great deal of pride in their work, so much so that even on festive occasions men can be seen competing with each other in tractor maneuvering contests while a crowd looks on.

Obviously, the participation of members is concommitant to need for the skills possessed by the individuals. Some highly specialized tasks require a great deal of skill and expertise and others require only patience and a strong back. Along with the mechanization of agriculture came the need for a labor force skilled in operating machinery and in the newest techniques of pruning and thinning out the fruit, and not everyone has been trained for these jobs. According to collective regulations, all the work is equally divided among those
possessing a certain union qualification, and in the course of the present study approximately 100 members were asked if they thought that the person who was best at a certain job should get to do it permanently instead of having to rotate it. The usual response to that question was that "It is just the way things have traditionally been done in Ravenna. I go to work one day, and the next guy goes the next day. We have to take turns". Another response which made this writer feel embarrassed by her "California" lack of collective spirit was "Do I have the right to prevent another from working? Others have to eat too. How would they eat if I did?"

Despite the high ideals, there are differences in the participation of members on the collectively owned and managed land. They do not work an equal number of days per year as in an ideal collective situation. Some women choose not to help with the fruit harvest because the work is too hard, but others who are unskilled may not be able to work even though they want to do so. Sometimes as little as ten percent of the membership can perform up to forty percent of the total labor. These are the highly skilled machine operators who not only know how to operate the machines but also how to repair them as well. There is actually a shortage of skilled labor and so these workers can have nearly full employment. Collectives encourage members to take courses to become specialized, and a person who knows how to do all the jobs on the farm inevitably works more than one who doesn't. The members are strict in their insistence that at the end of the year all those who are available for work should have an equal
number of days, but this has to be according to their level of union qualification.

As of this writing, women are beginning to take the course offered for specialization in the pruning of fruit trees, a job that had traditionally been reserved for men. Only in the very recent past, women wanting to specialize in this area were ridiculed about the trees not bearing fruit as a result. This still goes on in the areas where husbands fear competition from their own wives for this job, but in some areas of the province where fewer men work as braccianti the old superstitions have dissolved and women no longer fear losing their femininity by doing the easier job of standing on a slowly moving truck and clipping the excess branches of the fruit trees. The only females on the boards of direction of collectives are in those collectives located immediately south of the city of Ravenna where many of the men work in city jobs.

As might be guessed, the differential participation of members corresponds to divisions on the basis of age and sex. It is the younger, male segment of the population that works the maximum number of days per year. If a job becomes one which has to be done year round, 7 days a week by one or two people, such as the care and feeding of the cows in the barn, the people who assume this job can no longer be members since the job is not rotated. "Hired" labor, including technicians, cannot legally exceed 4% of the membership, so most of the labor is rotated and there is no danger of the Ravenna collectives switching over to a system of hired labor. Some members work
less than 80 days per year, and these invariably are the old men and women members.

Several definite trends in the membership base of all Ravenna collectives can be observed, including the increasing average age of members, the increasing percentage of females, and the overall reduction in total membership. On the average collective, the number of members decreases over the years and the jobs become more specialized, but the total number of hours and the amount of wages per hectare constantly rises. This is in sharp contrast to the development occurring on the large capitalist farms of the area. Because of the decrease in members over the years there is some question of whether Ravenna's collectives will continue to serve their social purpose or whether they will become large enterprises owned by no one but built through the sacrifices of countless past members. This danger appears to be counteracted by the increasing number of women who have moved in to take up the slack in the fields. As the men of all categories of the agricultural population move into non-agricultural jobs, wives who might otherwise become unemployed can work part time in the collectives. Moreover, there is some slight indication in Ravenna that a small number of people are reversing the trend and are going to work in agriculture as urban employment opportunities cannot keep up with population increase. Immediately after World War II the number of members in Ravenna's collectives increased sharply and the gradual decrease in members since then means that the membership level is more like it was before the rush into the collectives as a result of
the upset in the economy caused by the war and the difficult recovery from the war in Italy.

The degree of participation and involvement of members in a collective depends upon the size and location of the collective enterprise. Collectives situated in the larga are generally larger and members of these collectives do not do as much work on private lands as is the case in the appoderata. In all areas there is surprisingly little turnover of membership. Most members have worked on these collectives for at least 15 years. Members who depend upon the collective for most of their yearly income are understandably more interested in the collective. They are more willing to invest and more often deposit their personal savings with the collective.

Because of local variations, it would be misleading to come up with an average figure for the amount of work done in and outside of the collective. Italians have a saying about statistics that they make it seem like there is a chicken in every pot when actually there are some who have two and others who have none. Nevertheless, union statistics indicate that the average number of days of employment for the 25,594 braccianti in the province of Ravenna in 1970 was 100. This includes work in the fields and packing plants. Eight percent of those workers worked 20% of the total days, and this leaves the number of days worked by the majority of braccianti at 87 days. Other jobs in the tourist centers, as domestic servants, or home textile manufacturing are not included in the union figures on the average number of days worked by braccianti as braccianti. Most
people in the braccianti settlements obviously worked only in agriculture, however.

According to statistics compiled for all red collectives in the province of Ravenna for 1972, the average number of days worked per active member was 74. This means that, on the average, the collectives provided three-fourths or more of the yearly employment of their members. The 1,678 specialized workers worked an average of 161 days per year on the red collectives whereas the 6,713 unspecialized workers worked only 51 days each.

That a certain amount of work is done on private farms in a given area doesn't mean that the interest in the collective is weak. Because the allocation of labor is done through the collaboration of union, collective, the informal labor cooperatives, and the Office of Allocation of Labor, a worker going to work on a private farm might work on the collective the following day. There is definitely the awareness of going to work for the padroni versus going to work on "terra nostra" (our land), but everybody does both. The increased interest and willingness to sacrifice found on some of the larger collectives of the larga is a reflection of the greater probability that the sacrifices will pay off soon in terms of increased opportunities for work.

One minor illegality that collectives do for their members is to falsify the number of days worked by each member in order to qualify them for state aid given to people who are only partially unemployed. In order to receive this unemployment benefit of 60% of the yearly wage, a person must have worked between 150 and 180 days per year.
Table 38. Membership in the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Mezzano, 1907-1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1967</th>
<th>1972</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>1,415</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The collective juggles the days of work so that when one includes the days worked in the packing plants, on private farms and elsewhere, it appears to be that most people fit into the category and therefore get the payment (called the **Cassa Integrazione**). Naturally, this intensifies the individual member's loyalty to the collective.

External Affiliations and Relationships

Collectives in Ravenna are democratically organized with no special rewards or punishments proffered to increase levels of production, yet collectives in Ravenna appear to enjoy a wider success than their counterparts elsewhere in the world. One of the reasons for the remarkable success of these collectives has undoubtedly been the integration of collectives with other organizations to form a very powerful network.

The most obvious association which the Ravenna collectives benefit from is that with the strong provincially based League of Cooperatives and the local Federation of Cooperatives. The agricultural collectives, which are considered producer cooperatives of the "first degree", are associated through the Lega with "second degree" service cooperatives and "third degree" cooperatives of cooperatives. This
Table 39. Active Members in the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Mezzano, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Comparison with 1969</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>782 active</td>
<td>912 active</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 40. Work in the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of Mezzano, 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Average Number of Days/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized</td>
<td>120,930 (29%)</td>
<td>108 (13%)</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecialized</td>
<td>293,925 (71%)</td>
<td>642 (87%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>414,855</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(312 hours/hectares)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41. Hours Worked in 1972 on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of San Alberto, 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unspecialized</td>
<td>173,945</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor Drivers</td>
<td>72,610</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Member Employees</td>
<td>11,717</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Pigs</td>
<td>18,736</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Cows</td>
<td>22,939</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Machines</td>
<td>5,494</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Vineyards (for home use)</td>
<td>9,706</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehydrator Plant</td>
<td>5,156</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Turn&quot; Caller</td>
<td>720</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>313,778</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 42. Days of Work on the Braccianti Agricultural Cooperative of San Zaccaria, 1972-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Membership</th>
<th>Tractor Drivers</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>1,061</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>2,920</td>
<td>2,279</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>6,690</td>
<td>7,076</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>1,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1,404</td>
<td></td>
<td>364</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td></td>
<td>560</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>729</td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>173</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Wages increased by 3% for the general membership and 3.4% for the tractor drivers.

Source: Braccianti Cooperative of San Zaccaria.

Vertical integration serves many useful purposes from technical management to collective buying and selling to the acquiring of financing.
One of the first questions I asked of the collective farms visited in Ravenna was how they managed to compete with privately-owned enterprises on the open market. The answer, they said, was simply that there was no direct competition at all, for a number of reasons. First the collectives deliver everything they produce to the marketing cooperatives associated with the Lega, and secondly, there are differences in the types of crops produced by collectives and large private farms. Like small family farms, collectives devote a great deal of energy to the production of fruit, and large private farmers as a rule do not. According to local people, unscrupulous middlemen for a long time made the marketing of the highly valuable but perishable fruit difficult for small farmers until the first modern cooperative refrigerator and packing plant in Ravenna was established at Mezzano in 1957 through the efforts of 18 agricultural production collectives and one owner-operated farm. Ten years later, 463 owner operators, 102 agrarian reform recipients, 81 tenant farmers, and 54 renters had joined the Mezzano marketing cooperative, plus 49 farmers who work their land with hired labor. Since that time, eleven other wine cellars, packaging, transformation and marketing cooperatives associated with the red movement have developed in the province and there is now a large organization (Consorzio Ortofruticole Ravennate) which coordinates the smaller ones and puts the single "COR" label on all products. Membership of these various second degree cooperatives is substantial. Together all these disparate groups and their members cultivate a grand total of 28,000 hectares
of land, equivalent to 20% of the agricultural surface in the province of Ravenna.

These second degree cooperatives, as they are called, employ 1,700 workers in the separate functions of the marketing process alone. Most of these employees are women who belong to the braccianti collectives as well. In 1970, for instance, these women, dressed in colorful purple tunics, sorted, wrapped, and packaged 93,636 tons of fruit and vegetables for shipping all over Europe and the world. The huge plants they work in are clean, new, pleasant places utilizing modern machinery to transform fruit and vegetables into juices, jam, canned and frozen products. During the same year, cooperative wine cellars processed 58,600 tons of grapes into wines and even manufactured the bottles to sell it in (C.O.R. Publication, 1971). Catholic and Republican movements have their own networks of the same types of cooperatives, and braccianti women in the rural areas who work for these other cooperatives are identifiable by the different color tunics they wear.

Despite the efforts and achievements of the braccianti collectives in the realm of expanding the use of human resources in the fields, mechanization is a fact of life and braccianti women still work less than they would like to. They recognize that mechanization lessens the fatigue that used to accompany the heavier manual jobs of the field and they are thankful for the development of the second degree cooperatives which contribute to their yearly employment. They universally prefer work in the COR plants because they don't have to
get dirty and the work is not as exhausting. For the work they do in these non-profit cooperatives, they receive only union wage, but they generally regard their work as paying off in terms of higher incomes for their collectives and the work they do in the fields.

Without a doubt, the core of the cooperative movement in Ravenna is the Federation of Cooperatives (Federazione delle Cooperative). The Federation, an association of collectives, began at the turn of the century to regulate competition between the various local collectives as they made bids for the labor on the massive public and private land reclamation works. Under the leadership of powerful Nullo Baldini, the Federation assumed contracts for road and railway building and land reclamation in the south of Italy and abroad in Greece and Syria. Eventually, the Federation was able to acquire land that was reclaimed through government contracts by the individual collectives. Once the land was rendered productive, the Federation managed it directly for 20 years, although labor was provided by individual collectives. On October 28, 1950, the assembly of the Federation decided that it had become too centralized and on November 8, 1952, the 3,000 hectares belonging to the Federation were ceded to the individual collectives at a lower rent than they would have had to pay on the open market. It was agreed that a collective could pay an even lower rent if it failed to make union wage in a given year. The role of the Federation then became one of providing guarantees and financing for the growing cooperative movement in Ravenna, encompassing not only collectives of agricultural, dock, construction and transport
workers, but agricultural service and marketing and consumer cooperatives as well (Cooperazione Ravennate, XVIII, January-June, 1968:8). Today, the Federation owns 2,934 of the 9,341 hectares belonging to the red collective movement.

The influence of the Federation upon collectives in Ravenna has been substantial. The Federation always evaluated the wisdom of prospective investments before granting guarantee for loans. It also provided excellent technical assistance, opportunities for large scale collective buying and selling and even direct financing. The two main functions of the "Federcoop" (as the old Federation is now called) today are financial and agricultural; that is it employs technicians who study technical and economic problems as a service to the agricultural collectives and cooperatives, and it also researches ways of obtaining credit for the provincial movement. Individual collectives are not required to follow the technical advice, but they usually do. It has been their experience that the qualified technicians are knowledgeable and make it possible for collectives to guarantee increasing employment even though technological displacement was occurring on the large private farms. One braccianti in Longastrino shared his feeling that the price paid to the Federcoop for technical services was ridiculously low in comparison to the tremendous value of the directives.

Located in the same large building in the center of Ravenna as the Federcoop, the Provincial League of Cooperatives is the organization which coordinates the different sectors of the cooperative
movement in Ravenna and associates them with the national Socialist-Communist organization of cooperatives. According to a bulletin of the Lega, twenty-five percent of the operating expenses are paid through contributions of the state and the rest is paid by the individual collectives and cooperatives that choose to take advantage of their technical services. The function of the Lega is to provide direction and planning for the cooperative movement as a whole, and to promote the articulation of the cooperative movement with other social movements and with the state, regional, provincial, and communal governments. The Lega also provides publications, social activities, and courses for worker specialization. In addition to the Provincial League, there is a Regional Committee of the League of Cooperatives, which coordinates the cooperative movement on the regional level.

Although horizontal grass roots participation is essential to the success of any collective enterprise, this vertical organization found in the Ravenna movement is valuable in several ways. The fact that there is an association of this type guards against the possibility that a manager of a particular collective might never want to take risks for fear of jeopardizing his job. When this occurs, as it did once during my stay, a representative of the Lega calls attention to the matter. On the other hand, as was mentioned earlier, a successful hired manager that has proven himself capable in the management of a collective might be able to move up in the movement to the technical offices of the Federcoop or the Lega. Financially, the
association of collectives is invaluable since they help each other to weather bad times that might otherwise cause failure.

The relationship between collective farms in Ravenna and agricultural labor unions is less clearly defined as the relationship between local collectives and the provincial organizations. However, that relationship deserves a certain amount of careful scrutiny since it has probably been one of the most important factors in the success of Ravenna's collective farms. In the past, some of the collectives were called "braccianti union cooperatives" even though they were managed as enterprises independent of the unions. Today, the two organizations are autonomous but have a significantly parallel relationship insofar as they are made up of the same members in the same towns and provide mutual support against private landowners of the province. Although the local offices of collective and union were often housed in the same building, I was aware of only one case of overlap in management personnel. This was in the town of Longastrino in which the director of the collective is also a union official.

Although they are autonomous, collective farms in Ravenna are officially affiliated both with labor unions and political parties. Like the Federcoop, the unions have a definite role in seeing that collectives remain true to their principles and economically solvent. The Federbraccianti, the farmworker union that adheres to the national Socialist-Communist C.G.I.L. labor union, insists upon an equal division of labor among workers and upon the payment by the collective of union wage. Although there has never been a strike on collective
lands, the union bitterly opposed the change of the collective organization beginning in the middle 50's from basically a sharecropper agreement between collective and member to the new system, the "New Rapport", in which the members assumed full risk for the farm in return for sharing in a greater part of the income. The reason for this objection on the part of the union was explained to me by Maria Bassi, a union organizer. The union's goal was to maintain and increase union wages, not to endanger them. In fact, the rapport between union and collectives in Ravenna is highly unusual in the world since unions generally don't have as a goal the actual taking over of ownership and management of production.

Union activities in Ravenna have been both directly and indirectly responsible for the acquisition of land by collectives in what might be called a spontaneous, de facto land reform. In return, collectives have provided support for the unions. When the union announces a hike in the wages for farmworkers, the collectives are first to pay it. Collectives provide employment for workers who go on strike and invite workers who are not members and who are not on strike to avoid breaking the strike by coming to work on the collective. This has led to the accusation by private landowners that unions artificially support collectives by raising wages on private farms. More commonly, however, when workers get a larger share of profits on the collectives, they ask for the same thing on private farms.

The fact is that the apathy of landowners with regard to agriculture in Ravenna has always been a primary concern of the agricultural
laborers. Many large tracts of inherited land sit idle while their owners practice other professions. These uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands have repeatedly been targets for union activity, and collectives have aided this struggle in a remarkable way. In what is called a strike in reverse (sciopero alla rovescia), braccianti move onto the property in question with the shiny new machines belonging to their collective. They clear the land, plant, and care for the crops. Many braccianti and their leaders have been arrested and prosecuted in these struggles, which occur not only on badly cultivated land but also every time a piece of land comes up for sale or when an owner decides to replace the braccianti sharecroppers with salaried labor. Landowners, fearful of another agrarian reform, are sometimes reluctant to spark a confrontation and quietly consent to sell the land to the collective. It is easy to see how, if it were not for the concerted effort of unions and collectives, the collectives would have to be contented with only a fraction of the land they now have.

Due to sympathy of the wider population for the braccianti cause, over the years many victories against the idea of private property have been won in Ravenna. Although there were no dramatic cases during my stay, I did participate one cold damp morning in a demonstration on some uncultivated land on the outskirts of the city of Ravenna. Hundreds of workers showed up on bicycles with placards they placed in the field declaring "This Land is Badly Cultivated", "Land to Those Who Work It" and the like. At the time, I couldn't see what good it would do but I found out a few months later that the owner,
fearing another agrarian reform, sold the land to a braccianti collective.

The ease with which that landowner was induced to sell was probably the result of fifty years of more violent confrontations. In one particular case in 1964 on a farm belonging to a "gentleman" named Graziani outside the town of Mezzano, the owner wanted to shift from sharecropping to wage labor. The braccianti sharecroppers refused to leave and kept working the land, and the owner waited until the crops were mature before trying to evict them forceably without paying them anything. To do the harvest, the owner brought in crumeri ("scabs" or literally "worms") from the next province. Local women braccianti laid down in front of the foreman's tractor, and the irate owner shouted for him to go ahead and run over them, which he refused to do. The next day, the majority of the crumeri left to go home on the train. With tears in their eyes, they explained to the braccianti that they had been tricked into coming by the promise of a few days work. Protected by the state police, the remaining crumeri began harvesting the grapes at dawn, singing the fascist song "Giovinezza", and by 8 o'clock in the morning, three thousand braccianti were surrounding the farm. The demand stated on their picket was:

We want this land to give not only capitalist profit but well being for everyone. This is why we want agrarian reform.

Fearing violence, the local town council ordered the owner to cease and desist and to remove the crumeri in the interest of maintaining the peace! This was not simply because the town council was made
up of communists sympathetic to the braccianti but reflects the philosophical conviction that human life is more important than private property. It took over a year, but Graziani finally put the land up for sale. Of course, no one would touch it except the braccianti collective (Bignami, 1969:307-314).

It is interesting to speculate about the importance of the fact that the agricultural work force was of local origin and of the same race as the larger population in bringing about their spontaneous *de facto* land reform. Contrast the situation in Ravenna where most of the city people have relatives who either were or still are agricultural laborers to the historical indifference of the larger population to the plight of farmworkers in California where farm labor is performed largely by migrants and people of different races, languages, and cultures.

The Italian Communist Party is called the third "leg" of the worker movement in Ravenna in addition to collective and union movements. The Communist Party, in fact, is so strongly supportive of the worker movement in Ravenna that it has been the target of mostly unsubstantiated charges of doing everything from selling public lands to collectives to placing party activists in managerial positions in collectives and taking kickbacks from them to support the Party.

These were the kind of allegations which probably had some truth to them but were extremely difficult to investigate. Old newspapers showed that there was some sort of scandal in which the League of Cooperatives was said to have falsified the balance sheet in order to
hand over profits to the P.C.I. The allegation was countered in an item by item accounting of where the money went and a statement that the low level of "profit" of the League was the cause of the "success" of the movement (Geminiani, 1955:27).

Although I found little concrete evidence about direct connections between collectives, labor unions, and Communist Party except that they were "different aspects of the same struggle against monopoly and state capitalism in Italy", I was told by many different sources that the practice of workers contributing an amount of their monthly wages to the P.C.I. was widespread. Ravenna's collectives are definitely not subsidized by the P.C.I., but it is very possibly true that some kickbacks which are perhaps voluntary come from the wages of hired technicians and administrators. As to the accusation that the P.C.I. puts party activists in such positions, this may also be true since many of them were politically active. However, the management of both League of Cooperatives and the individual red collectives is definitely composed of many members of Republican and Socialist as well as Communist political parties.

The Communists have been accused of favoring the growth of collectives in order to get votes (Picchi, 1968:90). Although they probably have done certain things along these lines, they didn't really have a Communist administration in Ravenna until the early 1970's. The long time ruling Christian Democrat Party, although critical of the Communists for their support of collectives, has behaved in the same way. In addition to direct aid to collectives and the renting of
public lands to collectives, both of which have been done by Christian Democrat and Communist politicians alike, another form of aid contributed by both parties is the establishing of low-cost subsidized day care centers in each of the small rural towns of the province. As a result, women who might ordinarily have had to stay home instead are able to join the community of workers and become loyal and enthusiastic members of the local collective.

Although the precise relationship between the Ravenna collectives and the Italian Communist Party is subject to a great deal of speculation, there is undoubtedly an ideological connection between the two. Romagnols traditionally engage in endless discussions and debates night after night, and the personal identities of the people are wrapped up in the politics of the society. Being a member of the Communist Party means that a person is well-versed in ideas about how everyone should behave as cooperators (cooperatori) and gives him a lingo with which to discuss the common enemy, class consciousness, and class pride, a tremendous amount of which stems from the realization that the braccianti class in Ravenna has managed to build an "island of socialism" within a capitalist society. A rather unusual anthropologist-informant relationship developed during the course of this study in which the agricultural workers continually expressed their concern about the sad state of farmworkers in the anthropologist's native land of California. They tried to do their part for foreign aid by providing pointers which could be applied to bring that backward society into the twentieth century (things that California
farmworkers are now fighting for such as hiring halls were won a hundred years ago in Ravenna).
It was a simple story. In winter, when the snow reached from the high Apennine peaks to the Adriatic shore, the peasants dug the drainage ditches of the woods and fields, stripped the trees for firewood, removed the lichens from the olives, trimmed the vines and repaired their carts. With the thaw in February, they manured and ploughed their fields. Then spring came, and with it the pruning and planting of the vines, the planting of trees, the sowing of the March grain, the flax, beans, millet and hemp, and the digging of the kitchen gardens. In May and June they ploughed again, planted hawthorn hedges, clipped the sheep, mowed the meadows, hoed and reapèd the corn, and formed the stocks in the fields. Then in high summer, under a heat relieved only by sudden thunderstorms, they cut the flax, brought the grain to the granary, hoed the vines, and cut the hemp. Lupins were sown that they might be ploughed into the field as fertiliser. With autumn, there was ploughing again, and the digging out of the corn roots before ploughing, there was the threshing of the corn ears on the granary-floor, and the grape harvest. In October and November the fruit trees were stripped, the olives gathered, the honey taken from the hives. Then the cycle recommenced (Larner, 1965:99-100).

John Larner's translation of archive material relates to the 13th century specifically, but it can be used to describe the setting and the lives of the Romagnol Peasant almost from the time of the beginnings of the Roman Empire down to the beginning of the 19th century. The Black Era (500 B.C.-600 A.D.)...invaded and enslaved

Around 500 B.C. the Etruscans in the area of Rome launched "the glory that was Rome", built the Circus Maximus, the Cloaca Maximus (the great sewer), and the Forum. Their armies invaded the Po Valley and enslaved the peasantry. About 100 years later the armies of the
Gauls swept down from the north, sacked Rome, drove the Etruscans out of the Po Valley, and placed the wretched Romagnol peasants into a Gaullist yoke, robbing, pillaging, killing, burning and raping as they came.

The Romans eventually drove the Gauls from Rome and around 50 B.C. a triumphant Julius Caesar sat atop the pinnacle of Roman Empire power and influence. The Roman army patrolled the Romagnol land. Perfectly perpendicular streets which are still in existence were built up to the edges of the swamps in this period and the ancient borders of Roman occupation can still be recognized from the air by the distinctive organization of fields and vines developed by the Gauls and expanded by the Romans (Sereni, 1957:27).

But in a few hundred years, the forces from the north (this time the Franks) pushed again southward to loot, plunder, and rule and pretty much buried the Roman Empire by the year 493 A.D. at Ravenna, when Theodoric I, King of the Ostrogoths accepted the surrender of Odoacer, the barbarian chief who had held the reins of the Empire after the defeat of Augustus, the last Roman emperor.

Ravenna became the center of the shift of power from Rome to the Ostrogoths and the Byzantine Empire, and flowered in the prosperity and peace that ensued. A safe base, a refuge immune to attack by land, and most importantly an Adriatic seaport—Ravenna was in its prime.
The Dark Era (600-1400)...half slave and half free

The forces from the north that invaded and enslaved the Romagnol peasantry were led by kings that began to embrace Christianity, and these kings began to give large holdings of their conquered lands to the Church, including lands in the Po Valley. This led to the establishment of civil control of these lands by the Church, and the era of the Papal States began. To this very day the people of Romagna have never forgotten this development, and the very fabric of life in these parts is saturated thoroughly with a resentment of being an occupied land under the harsh exploitation of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Church hierarchy laid the basis for this unending enmity by corruptly turning over lands that had evolved as communal lands to the nobles and aristocracy, who then used them to build a feudal society with necessarily the Romagnol peasants as their vassals. Thus began the centuries known as the Dark or Middle Ages.

It is the static and demonstrably "stable" period of human history described by Webb in The Great Frontier, the period before Christianity and other religions made their ideas percolate in the larger affairs of mankind; the historical moment before the awesome effect of the Industrial Revolution. We call it the "Dark Ages", and it may indeed have been a dark period for human beings; but some currently curious environmentalists are noting that the skies were blue and the waters ran clear. The forests on Mount Lebanon and the Apennines were enjoying their last moment of life before the onslaught of the axes of "progress"; holding back tenaciously with their roots
the life giving soil that would soon go cascading in a flood of silty erosion down the mountain slopes to lay the shaky foundation for the agriculture of Ravenna, the earth mother that the braccianti cling to for life and survival.

By the end of the 13th century, there were several co-existing types of peasant tenure in Romagna: virtually enslaved vassals on feudal estates who were obliged to provide food and military service to the lord and abide by the laws laid down by him; tenant farmers called mezzadri who were half free and half enslaved by virtue of a contract with the landlord (padrone); landless laborers who did seasonal work; and, interestingly enough, relatively free peasants who held long term leases to land. Socio-political units were of three types: the feudal village, the independent warring castles, and the small rural municipalities (comuni) formed of many hamlets loyal to a lord of the dominant town.

During the 13th century, serfs who fled their farms had to be returned, but in 1327 these provisions were no longer found in Ravenna's statutes (Larner, 1965:107). In the absence of inheritance based on primogeniture in which property would pass undivided to the eldest son, feudal properties in Romagna were subject to extreme fragmentation; and soon it would become illegal for a man to swear vassalage with full military obligations and implications to any feudal lord. Continuous blood feuds were dangerous to life and limb of serfs who were always running away and who, in Romagna especially,
often murdered their own lord and his entire family. Advice given to nobles by a veteran feudal lord was:

stay away from Romagna...or fortify the place with streams, ditches, dykes, hedges, palisades, and a watchtower, where the head of the household and his servants may take refuge with their property when there is need...(or) you will have to prepare yourself for death (Larner, 1965:99).

According to Larner, the strength of the feudal system had been military rather than economic, and its continuation depended on the presence of serfs (1965:113). Each lord tried to increase his number of serfs by hiding runaway serfs from other villages, but they soon had to face the reality that pure serfdom was dying. With feudalism on the wane, servile tenure persisted in the guise of the mezzadria. In the 14th century, as the grip on the serfs was weakening, that on the peasants who held long leases for "three lifetimes" was being tightened. Those property owners who had previously leased land to peasants sought to convert all land to the mezzadria, where they would have more control over agricultural production and a larger share of the product (Larner, 1965:102). From the 14th century to the beginning of the 19th century, all evidence points to tenant farming as the most widespread type of tenure. Feudal serfs, land-leasing peasants, and agricultural day laborers all apparently entered the ranks of the mezzadri. The tenant families were large and extra hired labor was not required until agriculture became more intensive in the second half of the 19th century.

In the county of Ravenna, tenant farming dates back to the year 1348 following a plague of black death which threatened to leave the
countryside abandoned if landlords did not establish partnerships with their serfs (Pasolini, 1868:71). After that time, the system inched along for centuries, each small farm being barely self-sufficient. Ignorant tenant farmers were slow to demand an end to exploitation, and the system was and still is regarded by some landlords to be an ideal system of relationship between capital and labor. As they see it, the tenant farmer is a small "entrepreneur" who is a partner to the owner:

It is the only labor contract that permits those who earn the income to dedicate a conspicuous part not only to consumer goods but to productive goods: to investments in other words (translation mine) (Brocchi, 1964:25).

The mezzadria contract, although renewable annually and sometimes lasting hundreds of years, was not a written one and differed from province to province according to local tradition and local statutes. In its pure form, it required that half of all working capital for animals, seed, fertilizers, etc., be provided by the tenant farmer. It was the tenant's responsibility to contribute the necessary tools and all labor, including outside labor if needed and any new tools that might be needed as agricultural techniques changed. The owner, in turn, provided the tenant with a house and barn and approximately 10 hectares of land. Given the extreme poverty of the tenant class in many areas, the owner often paid for more than half of the expenses. This was not necessarily out of generosity, for in return he received a larger final product and innumerable personal services rendered by the tenant family. Landlords were not what might by any
stretch of the imagination be called entrepreneurs, but they dictated
the types of crops that would be grown, usually those which required
the most labor with the least investment and yielded the largest pro-
duct (Landi, 1972:11).

Although the mezzadria system is universally recognized as a
backward system, according to Larner it may have initially been a
stimulus to production:

> If peasants worked the land badly, failed to manure
> it or worked it otherwise than was decreed in the
> statutes, they had to give the lord the equivalent
> value of what the land would have produced, had it
> been worked well...all decrees were aimed at ensur-
> ing the efficient working of the land, that the
> proprietor might receive a sufficient return on his

The peasants themselves, of course, preferred a definite lease on the
land as many of them had held such contracts in the middle ages. This
is an issue that has been debated since the middle ages and, strangely
enough, is still being debated in modern-day Italy.

Of one thing there is no doubt. The mezzadria definitely con-
tained the remnants of feudalism. Over and above the agricultural
work and half of the yearly product, the tenant family provided
chickens, eggs, meat, milk, domestic services, and enforced corvee
labor at the will of the padrone. Variation in the size of the tenant
family was supposed to correspond to the labor needs of the farm, but
despite this business-like aspect of the contract (Armuzzi, 1941:20),
the tenant farming system was regarded by owner and worker alike as
not purely a labor arrangement but a social relationship as well.
The amount and quality of land differed among tenant families, the portion of some too poor to maintain life that they stole away in the middle of the night, carrying whatever little bit there was to show from hundreds of years of labor, while the majority survived and begged on hands and knees to have contracts renewed. Protected by a customary tie to the land, a moral obligation on the part of the padrone to help them in adversity, and consuming their part of the product in kind, tenant farmers were isolated from the fluctuations of the market and the external world in general. For centuries, traditions and superstitions remained intact; the Ravenna peasant lived closed within his rural world, at one end of which was the padrone and at the other, the church. One of the eternal contradictions in Italian society has always been the tradition of anti-clericalism directed against the hierarchy, opposed by the strong influence of the local parish church in the lives of the people.

In spite of the submission to authority and the obsequious servitude and gifts lavished on the padrone by the peasants, by the middle of the nineteenth century (and probably earlier as well) the tendency for the tenant family to conceal part of the product was generally practiced and considered a commonplace characteristic of the system (Preti, 1955:31). Many generalizations have been made by historians about the coarseness of manners and backward "mentality" of the peasant class, illustrating the effects upon the people of a stifling, meager, and isolated life on the family operated farms.
However economically "irrational" the mezzadria contract was, peasant family life was a very business-like matter. Families were rigidly organized on a patriarchal basis. In 1879, the average size of the farm was 8.3 hectares and the farm family was composed of 9 people, 5 or 6 of whom worked (Nardi, 1957:269). The father, called the azdor ("businessman") ruled the family with an iron hand and made all decisions, important and unimportant alike, even after he may have become a bit senile. The mother, the azdora, took care of the house and chickens. The favorite son, usually the eldest, worked in the barn taking care of the cows, and the rest of the family worked in the fields. Agricultural production was diversified enough so that the tenant family was kept busy most of the year (Porsini, 1966:156). Since nobody was paid a wage on the basis of labor contributed, some sons were favored according to the whim of the father and given more responsibility and more money to spend than their siblings. Post-marital residence was in the house of the groom's parents, and each wife cared for her own children and her own room of the farmhouse in addition to her allotment of work in the fields. The houses were dreary, crowded with people and animals. The ground floor was made of dirt, and furnishings were sparse and crude. The diet, consisting mainly of grain and corn with meat only on Sundays, was inadequate.

The younger members of the tenant family shared one set of presentable clothes and took turns going to town on Sundays. Campanilismo, literally "bell-tower-ism", or loyalty to the bell tower of the town's church, was another carry-over from the feudal system
of independent castles (castelli) or feudal villages. Still found today, campanilismo is often viewed from a negative standpoint in that it makes for extreme provincialism in the rural areas of Italy. On the other hand, the positive aspect is, of course, the feeling of community it engenders that is lacking in the large urban centers.

In 1278, Ravenna came under the domination of the Papal State. During the reign of the Papal State, the once great city began a slow decline. Its port had silted in, and all its trade was lost to Venice. In 1441, Venice established direct control over Ravenna. In 1509, the city once again became part of the Papal State which turned towards the predominantly agricultural base for revenue.

The Gray Era (1400-1800)...the early dawn of the braccianti

Ravenna was doomed to decadence by the silting up of the port and by the repeated flooding of local rivers which continually wreaked havoc on agriculture, damaging trees and vines, destroying harvests and decreasing the fertility of the soil. It was during the reign of Pope Clemente VII in 1531 that the first sporadic attempts at land reclamation in the lagoons of the larga were initiated more as a measure against malaria than for agricultural purposes. As more land was liberated from the Adriatic, some members of tenant families were sent out daily to work small pieces of the large tracts of land in the larga under the system of a partitanza. Like the modern sharecropping (compartecipazione) system, the partitanza sharecropper arrangement was intermediate between the tenant farming system and wage labor, in that the relationship between owner and worker was not
continuous or bound by tradition but the worker still received a share of the product instead of a wage, either a third (terzeria) or a fourth (quarteria). Owners were not required to provide houses, because the tenant farmers lived in the appoderata and went home each night.

Unlike the rest of Italy in which the remnants of feudalism had left the land divided into family-sized units surrounding the old castles of the city states, the new lands of the low plain were distinctive for their lack of divisions and for the large size of swamp and forest holdings which passed back and forth from nobles to church to conquerors and were used primarily for hunting and fishing by the aristocracy and secondarily for gathering cane and firewood by the peasants. Traditionally, wasteland belonged to the municipality and was used communally for the grazing of cows and oxen, but the monasteries of Ravenna initiated the practice of giving leases of fishing and hunting rights in the marshland of the Po basin to nobles (Larner, 1965:123-4). Eventually, this led to the alienation of a substantial part of the communal lands. According to census data available for the 18th and 19th centuries, communal land passed from 50% of the entire county of Ravenna in 1750 to less than 4% in 1835 (Nardi, 1972: 15-16). One striking example of this is the case in which the Papal State dispensed title to a large part of the coastal pine forest and swampland at the mouth of the Lamone River (there were no boundaries) to one Baron Belluzzi-Pergami who in turn was supposed to reclaim the land, construct farmhouses, insert tenant families, and put in better
crops in a sort of social mission to help the landless peasants (Bertondini, 1966:282). Once he became owner he did nothing of the kind.

Historical sources are in agreement concerning the static nature of Ravenna's agriculture throughout the reign of the Papal State, accusing the religious bodies and nobles who owned land of holding the land in a state of semi-abandonment. In the year 1798, Napoleon occupied Ravenna, but the Pope regained control in 1815. Except for brief revolutionary episodes in 1831 and 1848-1849, the city remained under this static rule until shortly before the unification of Italy in 1861. Nevertheless, the beginning of the 19th century ushered in the "Napoleonic Era" in which the bourgeoisie, financed by French capital, gradually began to replace Ravenna's landed nobility after 1830. There was a slight increase in the productivity of agriculture in the appoderata, owing to the increment in fodder produced on the new lands of the larga which enabled the maintenance of more animals. In addition to providing organic fertilizer, the animals provided labor which permitted a deeper, more intensive and exact treatment of the soil. The rotation of crops remained the same as the 18th century, corn followed by grain and clover. Production of grain was still pitifully low by modern standards, less than 5 quintals per hectare in 1880 (Porsini, 1966:183), but it was enough to sustain a wealthy aristocracy who lived in expensive "palaces". Other crops grown on the tenant farms were also of scarce productivity--grapes, beans, and hemp.
The mezzadria contract, unchanged since the year 1590, continued into the 19th century with no new provisions to compensate the peasants for the increase in expenses and labor they had to contribute. Pretty soon they would have to begin paying for extra labor out of their share of the product as well. Unfortunately, it never occurred to the tenants that theirs was a contract that could be modified like any other, perhaps even profoundly so. Consequently, during the first 20 years of the 19th century some tenant farmers abandoned their farms and came to the urban centers. This exodus, however, did not become a mass phenomenon until the end of the century when continued decrease in mortality rates and changes in agricultural techniques meant that the entire rural population, all of which was previously stabilized on the land, could no longer maintain a year-round connection to the soil.

There are many people in Ravenna today who can dig down into their memories deep into the past century, but the formation of the braccianti class itself is slightly beyond the recollections of those now living. The date of December 14, 1839, when the Lamone River burst over its banks, leaving crops ruined and covered with a thick layer of silt, signalled the beginning of tremendous changes in the Ravenna countryside. A young engineer by the name of Fillipo Lanciani envisioned the reclamation of the swamplands at the mouth of the Lamone River, which, at that time had no outlet in the Adriatic Sea. Unlike the famous draining of the Fens in England in which the removal of water caused the land to sink (Darby, 1956:104), Lanciani's plan
imitated the natural raising of the level of the land by systematically directing the flow of the soil laden rivers from one block of land to the next, a procedure he called "a colmata"; that is, land reclamation by the building up of "small hills". To offset the expense of doing this, Lanciani proposed that wet rice be grown as a transitional crop until after 10-15 years the level of the land would be raised sufficiently for dry farming. Eventually, the land would become dry enough to support the root systems of tree crops.

The grandiose scheme of engineer Lanciani came to fruition, financed largely by the local Papal government. The prospect of jobs brought the poor and dispossessed down out of the hills from the failing tenant farms and out of the cracks of the meager and depressed Romagnol economy, massing them into huge armies of men and wheelbarrows, straining and sweating to build a new land, and simultaneously building a new class of lowly and exploited workers. The braccianti, the farmworkers who "work with their arms" entered the stage of Romagnol history as a force to be reckoned with as a direct product of the dreams of Lanciani.

The prospect of future strife and conflict in this unfolding drama was guaranteed by the manner in which the local Papal government dispensed the title and control of the newly gained lands. Swamplands owned by the comune were given to the aristocracy with the proviso that they help pay for the cost of reclamation, and public funds were also used to reclaim other lands which were privately-owned or had previously been handed over to the nobility. The lengthy and
tedious struggle between the exploited Romagnol peasant and his exploiting ruling class landlord had now been elevated to a new battleground. No longer mostly concealed in the nooks and crannies of the small farms and hills and vales, the struggle now would proceed on the vast plain of the larga, with armies of braccianti instead of single families arrayed against landlords aided by governments who would amass power with large capital expenditures, tractors, and other farm machinery that must have looked like war machines to the constantly threatened braccianti.

Up until the period of the Lanciani reclamation, the few existing braccianti had been ex-tenant farmers who as a result of debts had been thrown off the farms they worked with their families. With the initiation of the reclamation works and rice cultivation, the Ravenna braccianate became a worker who sometimes chose to leave the tenant farmer way of life to free himself from the double control of his father and the owner of the farm. It was generally the younger, more rebellious and individualistic tenant farmers who chose the independent although more precarious existence as braccianti.

The real transformation of agriculture from the barely self-sufficient semi-feudalistic system did not occur until after the unification of Italy in 1861, when agriculture was called upon to sustain the financial burden of the new state. With the new red, white, and green Italian flag, a new kind of agriculture came into being. Until then, Italy had been a conglomeration of many small states,
lacking communication and markets. Unification of Italy eliminated tariffs between the ex-states and stimulated trade.

The emergent Italian state accelerated the reclamation works begun by the church and landowing nobles. The nobles, by this time, were finding themselves embarrassingly short of capital, and began to rent the land of the larga to entrepreneurs called "renters" (affittuari) for the purpose of land reclamation and rice cultivation. Owing to the richness of the delta soil, land reclamation works in Ravenna have never been simply "make work" schemes (they were at least as important as the government development of the methane resources discovered in 1953). Land reclamation quickly paid for itself many times over; and, according to Guzzini (an able researcher and one of the first agricultural technicians of the Federation of Cooperatives), the return on capital invested in these early ventures reached as high as 45% (1924:24).

Because rice was a very profitable crop, the attempts by landowners to expand its production had far-reaching effects. Pressure was put on tenant farmers in the appoderata to finance the expenses incurred by landlords in the developing larga, causing the proletarianization of the poorest families. According to Emilio Serini, in *Il capitalismo nelle campagne (Capitalism in the Countryside)*, it was the disintegration of the tenant families and not the birth rate which accounts for the large increases in the class of braccianti (1968:341). When a family could no longer feed itself on its assigned farm, it divided to become tenants elsewhere or to become braccianti,
a condition that was always accepted as the worst fortune even when there was no worry of lack of work (Porsini, 1966:171). Augusto Bolognesi, in "Stories from the Low Plain" says that:

For whoever failed as a tenant farmer, there was nothing left except to become a day laborer, the last spoke of the wheel...(translation mine) (1965:221).

The disintegration of tenant families occurred abruptly throughout Italy around the end of the 19th century. Italy had by far the highest emigration rate of any European country, 164 per 10,000 inhabitants as compared to 30 in Portugal, 32 in Germany, and 30 in Spain (Preti, 1955:52). The majority of these emigrants were tenant farmers or sons of tenant farmers, especially from the mountain and hill zones where the soil was less productive. The only areas where emigration was not so important were in industrial centers, in places where agriculture had become intensified through irrigation as in Lombardy, or, as in Ravenna, where reclamation works were taking place and provided an outlet for excess labor. Combined with local landless laborers, numerous migrants from the hills of the province of Ravenna and landless migrants from other parts of Italy swarmed into the newly developing lands of Ravenna's larga. Reduced to selling only the labor power of their "arms", this new braccianti class, unlike earlier classes of rural cultivators, was denied a continuous year round connection to the soil.

The story of the Ravenna braccianti, of their organizations and of their struggles, is inextricably linked to the process of
formation of the larga, a process really not beginning until the second half of the last century with the influx of private capital and public investments. In the large reclaimed estates it was difficult to establish the traditional tenant farming system because the acquisition of animals and the construction of farmhouses was so costly. Many landowners did not want to invest capital in establishing new tenant farms. These estates, and all of the land owned by public and semi-public entities, came to be characterized by extensive, mono-crop agriculture to which the tenant farming system was totally unsuited anyway, and the land came to be worked by braccianti instead. According to Barbieri, the new braccianti class, practically unknown before 1850, by 1879 had climbed to 17,743 men, women, and children, one tenth of the total population of the municipality of Ravenna (Nardi, 1957:277). Of that number, 9,689 were classified as workers in the census of 1881. They worked by the day, paid a fixed salary, by piece work, or by a system of sharecropping that was either individual or familial in which they provided labor from sowing to harvest for a single crop on a certain parcel of land, bearing part of the expenses and receiving compensation in the form of a pre-established share of the product. Whether braccianti received a wage or worked under the partitanza sharecropping system reflected the development or abandonment of certain crops and the rhythm of reclamation works: in a word, the type and degree of public and private investments in that desolate zone. These investments, and the quality of life of the braccianti
class, depended directly upon the general economy and upon the vicis-
sitides of prices and agricultural wages.

*The Red, White, and Green Era* (1880 and after) ... the collective idea takes root

Agriculture in Ravenna reached an apex in 1878. Land reclamation, an increase in the price of rice, a decrease in taxes, decrease in the interest rate on capital, and a doubling of the production of grain were all factors which encouraged investment in agriculture. Still, the land of the larga had no streets or houses, and there were no large estates with fixed employees yet. Braccianti settlements sprang up at the borders of the swamps, forming the towns of San Alberto, Mezzano, Santerno, San Bartolo, San Stefano, Campiano and others. Braccianti rose in the dead of the night and travelled up to 20 miles by bicycle to arrive at the borders of rice fields or reclamation works by dawn. Daily competition for jobs was fierce not so much because of insufficient work but because the work was so badly paid and there was little work in the winter months. In 1879, a governmental inquest on agriculture sponsored by Senator Stefano Jacini led to the publication of a monograph by G. Barbieri on conditions in Ravenna. Barbieri estimated that braccianti in the county of Ravenna worked an average of 189 days per year, which is more than they ever have since then (*Guzzini*, 1924:51). Two-thirds of that work was in the rice fields and the rest was on reclamation works and on the farms of the tenants in the appoderata.

By this time, the braccianti were a true agricultural proletariat, filling all types of temporary needs for employment. Presenting
themselves in the piazza each morning or receiving work through the medium of exploitative labor contractors, braccianti were never connected to any one farm, although employers freely utilized their labor even on holidays. The braccianti probably had no idea that this was a period of agricultural prosperity. In fact, Senator Stefano Jacini himself lamented that "Grave is the state of the workers, even though the lands they work are the most productive of Europe". Jacini found it unsettling that precisely in those areas with the most rapidly progressing systems of agriculture, problems of seasonal unemployment and bad living conditions were most severe (Preti, 1955:34). Jacini's vivid description of the braccianti category is very depressing:

the habitations are nothing more than huts with mud walls covered with grass...the interior is an impressionable squalor...a dead winter of unemployment...an insufficient diet based on corn causing the dreadful disease pellagra...and other diseases such as malaria and anemia connected with their state of misery (translation mine) (Preti, 1955: 55-58).

Jacini also noted the habit of braccianti men of spending a substantial portion of the family income on drink. (Old people in Ravenna today remember that alcoholism, a problem which is practically non-existent nowadays, was widespread in the past.)

As a result of Barberi's personal observations and research during this period of transition from precapitalist to capitalist forms of agriculture, he was of the opinion that no progress was being made. Instead of crediting the entrepreneurs with awakening a backward system that had been static for centuries, he accused them of trying to get whatever they could out of the land with no regard for
the land and no scruples about their treatment of agricultural labor (Bertondini, 1966:279). Despite all the faults of the semi-feudal tenant system, Barbieri believed it to have advantages over the more modern capitalistic system.

Curiously, this paradox of a prospering agriculture and an increasingly exploited and oppressed proletariat class that made the prosperity possible was paralleled closely in this period of the 1870's by the development of Colofina agriculture where the landlord's "estates of baronial magnitude" (McWilliams, 1939:49) that were built out of the profits of vast wheat and fruit agriculture contrasted starkly with the even more desperate conditions of the American agricultural proletariat: largely Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican workers who were forced to work and live under conditions that can only be characterized as unbelievable.

The only thing positive Jacini found to say in 1880 about the braccianti was that, living together in town instead of isolated on family farms, braccianti were less fatalistic and submissive than the tenants, they paid less attention to the priests, and they sought whenever possible to send their children to school rather than make them work (Preti, 1955:59).

This was definitely a period of massive social change in which old ways of living and producing were being upset, ushering in a wave of social banditry and violence in the rural areas (Bertondini, 1966:301). Conditions were especially dismal in Ravenna's larga. Emilio Serini writes that:
The swamps of the lowlands of Romagna impressed their character upon the whole region and its people—rustic bridges and lonely crossroads, banks barely accentuated above the level of the water. There grew a miserable population, hardened to exhaustion and danger in a loneliness that exasperated them into extreme individualism, that made their passions more wild and violent, fed by injustices and social inequalities. It is the classic land of ambushes and bloody vendettas; every bank, every bridge, every crossroad is still today linked by popular tradition to a bloody memory (translation mine) (1968:189).

The profitability of growing wet rice (averaging 10-12% return on capital invested during the entire period of reclamation according to Guzzini) brought employment for the growing agricultural proletariat, but they were badly paid and the employment in rice cultivation was short-lived for several reasons. In the first place, rice was only a transitional crop to be grown during the reclamation process. Secondly, the brusone, an insidious disease (for which I could find no English translation) destroyed 70% of the crop every four out of 10 years. Combined with the unrest of labor, changes in the conditions of the rivers, and a decrease in the market value of rice, entrepreneurs who had tended to prolong the period of reclamation before 1880 in order to grow rice, after that time reduced it to a minimum in order to grow forage. Eventually rice, the one crop foundation for the brief prosperity, was no longer grown at all in Ravenna.

Although for several years the cultivation of wet rice provided two-thirds of the yearly employment for the braccianti class, 70-75% of this work was done by the women and (as a result of a male supremacist attitude) the real reputation of the braccianti were as land
movers and not cultivators. With mattock and a week's supply of food in their wheelbarrows, the men set out to reshape the banks of rivers. These desperate and determined men huddled at night in makeshift lean-to grass shelters, on the edge of swamplands that swarmed with malarial mosquitoes. Organized on the basis of physical affinity in squads of 10 men each, they pushed heavy dirt-filled wheelbarrows at top speed for six hours a day for which they received two lire, good for one kilo of lamb. The strength of these squads of "piece workers" (cottimisti) is legendary in Ravenna. Guzzini observed that "workers tried to keep up with each other even to the point of surpassing their capacity" (1924:42).

No description of Ravenna or of the braccianti is complete if it omits the wheelbarrower's song, "Gli Scariolanti". By far the most popular song in Romagnol folklore, it is sung in various forms in the different localities, and new verses are always being added to the old melody. It is one of the few Italian folk songs which is not in dialect, a reflection of the diverse places of origin of the Romagnol braccianti. No English translation can do justice to this passionate song, sung as the men worked loading and dumping tons of damp earth, as many as four to five thousand of them working on a single job. Many versions of this song express amorous intentions, political sentiments, feelings about travelling great distances to reclaim swamplands in the Agro Pontino near Rome, repairing earthquake damage in Sicily or building railroads abroad, and even feelings about going to war:
At midnight exactly,
a loud noise is heard.
It must be the wheelbarrowers _lerì lerà_,
who are going to work.

Turning, returning,
and return to return again,
we are the wheelbarrowers _lerì lerà_,
who are going to work.

The beautiful wheelbarrowers,
they are all so crafty,
tricking the blonde _lerì lerà_,
for a kiss of love.

In the morning at dawn,
the trumpet sounds la la la,
they are the braccianti who are going away,
beautiful brunette, would you like to come?

Below the path of the bridge _lerà_,
a loud noise is hear _leri_,
they are the scarolanti _leri_ _lerà_,
who are going to make love.

The girls of Bevilacqua _lerà_
have too much ambition.
They wear silk dresses _leri_
bought by their padrone.

At a good hour in the morning
when day has already broken,
the wheelbarrowers are going _lerì lerà_,
going to their work.

The sun has just appeared,
and they are already dripping with sweat,
it scorches the wheelbarrower _lerì lerà_,
who is married to work.

Now with the fall of evening,
exploited by the "gentleman",
the wheelbarrower returns _lerì lerà_
towards his freedom.

We want liberty
in the name of work
long live the wheelbarrowers _lerì lerà_
and down with the priests and "gentlemen".
At a good hour in the morning,
the sound of drums is heard leri lerà.
It must be the drafted soldiers who have to leave,
tell me my beautiful one if you want to come.

At election time exactly,
a loud noise is heard,
it must be the liberals and the priests lari lerà,
who are going to make love.

Who are going to make love,
forgetting every grudge,
forgetting all the insults lari lerà,
in a kiss of love (translation mine)

In addition to work as wheelbarrowers, the men also helped during peak periods on the tenant farms. One could earn from five to seven lire per day, working from dawn to dark during harvest time.

To those braccianti who didn't get to work on these farms, history has it that:

Whoever didn't look strong enough to the eye of the azdor had a hard time opening the door of his house and telling his family that he didn't succeed in selling himself that day. But, even for the more fortunate, the harvest didn't last forever. It was true that they didn't have to pay for their own food and were allowed to sit at the table with the family, but they had to be ever so careful in working hard to make nice looking bundles even if the wheat was bad so they would be hired again the next year (translation mine) (Bolognesi, 1965:221).

The economic position of the tenant farmers advanced somewhat in the period of agricultural prosperity following the unification of Italy. The unloading of extra "arms" in the growing class of braccianti left fewer mouths to feed and Barberi notes that before 1880 the tenant farmers for the first time were able to save enough money to buy salt, oil, and to pay taxes. However, that prosperity
was short-lived, and the exodus of young tenant farmers became a mass phenomenon after 1880. And, when the bulk of the transition from tenant to braccianti took place, it was no longer the result of the pull of the reclamation works and rice plantations; rather it was the increase from push to shove on the tenant farms stemming from a deep agricultural crisis which intensified the process of reorganizing agriculture in a capitalist fashion. In 1882, the agricultural crisis struck. The 20 year boom period following the unification of Italy was over. Countess Maria Pasolini, herself a large landowner, described what happened as follows:

In 1882 a notable reduction of prices began. Owners were constricted to suspend works to improve farms that were not already developed, to diminish the cultivation of hemp, and many found it more advantageous to completely get rid of the tenants...In these cases the tenants were substituted by salaried workers and more tenant families went to increase the class of braccianti. In other words after 1882 with the fall of prices, the practice was to invest less wherever possible and to return to less intensive cultivation, reduce the land moving jobs, thus worsening the conditions of the braccianti while at the same time increasing their numbers by expelling the tenants (translation mine) (1892:6-7).

The fall of agricultural prices induced not only the landowners but also the state to suspend reclamation works. As little capital as possible was invested in the land. This, combined with the reduction of the rice fields from 5,900 hectares to a few hundred in a very short time (Guzzini, 1924:20), served to worsen the position of tenant farmers and day laborers alike. The financial crisis provoked a return to the old practice of semi-abandonment of the land. For example, whereas the cost of production of rice had been 430-450 lire
per hectare (285 of which were for manpower), forage, the new substitute for rice, required an expense of only 45–60 lire per hectare (Porsini, 1966:261). The mezzadria, which as a rule supported an intensive cultivation of the land, was substituted by salaried workers and grass crops requiring fewer "arms". A socialist newspaper in 1884 said:

Owners, to get more out of the land than they got from the tenants, rented the land; the renters, in turn, to increase their profit and because the grain they would produce cannot compete with the grain of America, have abandoned the cultivation of cereals and put their fields to grass. That sort of crop requires much less manpower; the renter spends less and earns more; and that which he spends less is subtracted from the daily bread of the workers (translation mine) (Berselli, 1966: 14).

In the town of Conselice alone, 30% of the tenant class entered the ranks of the braccianti (Dirani, 1957:146). And, during this period of crisis, both tenants and braccianti were reduced to working the small parcels of land in the larga under the a partitanza share-cropping system. Those tenants who were fortunate enough not to be either kicked off the land by the padrone or ruined by increasing taxes on flour, had to supplement their income by sending all extra members of the family into the larga. All that was left for the majority of braccianti in the way of employment was the cultivation of grain, corn, forage, and sugarbeets a partitanza. Unlike the few remaining jobs that paid a daily wage or piece work, the partitanza system did not exclude old men, women, and children, and in Ravenna
this system became a safety valve that provided work for "weaker arms" as well as strong ones during times of crisis.

This a partitanza system is described by Italian historians as a transitional phase in the proletarianization of the peasantry; which, due to the "retarded" development of capitalism in Italy was prolonged almost indefinitely (Nardi, personal communication). About the partitanza system, Jacini wrote:

Thank goodness for crops like rice and corn where it is in the entrepreneur's interest to allow the worker a share of the product...the abundance of arms in respect to the demand, because of the game of free competition, allows the imposition of low salaries, without any social considerations (translation mine) (Preti, 1955:34).

In 1890, Pasolini wrote about the continued increase in braccianti numbers that:

The increase in braccianti numbers worries the owners a great deal. For every job that needs to be done, 3 or 4 times the number of workers requested show up; often, so that all can work, they demand that they do a job together which will finish in only a few hours; other times they oppose the work done by the salaried workers that the owner employs all year that are chosen naturally among the best and to whom they are tied by affection and custom. Other times opposition gives way to threats and continuous fights which disturb and sadden all souls (translation mine) (Porsini, 1966:172).

Perhaps this historical moment is one of the most important events in the development of the modern Ravenna collectives. Suddenly, out of a violently individualistic, chaotically every-man-for-himself history, comes necessarily, for simple survival, an expression of cooperation and shared concern for each other's well-being that is startling in
the context of what has gone before. It is interesting to speculate on the significance of this development; namely the insistence on the part of the braccianti that work (and therefore remuneration) be equally divided in a period of intensive job scarcity. The situation could have led to the classic intra-class warfare so well known in the capitalist world, where a permanent army of unemployed is manipulated with divide and conquer tactics to frustrate any tendency toward working class solidarity. California is a good example of a case in which growers purposely pitted one racial group against another in their attempt to keep wages low.

In any case, this did not happen in Ravenna, and the owners were properly "worried" about the solidarity of the braccianti's concern for each other's well-being. And it is obvious that this development laid the groundwork for the basic spirit and the social "glue" that has held the Ravenna collectives together to this day.

The agricultural crisis of 1882 had several far-reaching effects. The elimination of rice as a crop and the cessation of public works was the most notable as far as the employment of the braccianti class was concerned. According to Barberi, before 1880 the braccianti averaged 90 days per year in the rice fields, 36 in public works, 30 on the tenant farms, 35 on other private reclamation and land moving jobs and 10 in other areas of employment. Rice had been especially important because it filled gaps in the agricultural cycle of the other crops, but rice production was sharply curtailed practically without warning. Another immediate effect of the agricultural crisis
as explained by Countess Pasolini was the end to the construction of new tenant farm units on the new lands, leaving braccianti with only 40 of the former days of employment. Braccianti had been employed to build houses, barns, streets, level land, and dig drainage ditches for the establishment of new tenant farms on the first 5,000 of the 14,000 hectares of land reclaimed from 1835-1910, but after 1900 no new land was turned over to tenant families. Although the tenants had been declining in numbers, until the beginning of the 20th century the amount of land farmed by this class had continued to increase.

Prompted by the agricultural crisis, the new lands that were no longer being assigned to the tenants were made into a new type of capitalist farm called the boaria (Guzzini, 1924:21) in which the existing production of grain and corn was modified by the introduction of fodder and sugarbeet crops. Shortly, the introduction of tractors and threshing machines at the turn of the century would transform the larga, once the site of swarming human activity, into "factories in the fields" staffed by an ever-decreasing number of workers. Productivity of the new system, due to increased use of chemical fertilizers, the new machines, and a so-called more "rational" use of labor made the boaria farms the epitome of progress in Ravenna.

The boaria farms, large by Ravenna's standards with from 100 to 300 hectares of land, were the first modern farms in the province. Instead of the small 10 hectare divisions and the family system of labor of the mezzadria, one family was inserted on each 30-40 hectares or so, and their jobs were specific—to look after the cows, make
repairs, and do some but not all of the work in the fields. In addition to the boaro and his family, there would be from 10-20 semi-permanent workers (braccianti obbligati) who had first choice for work and twice as many braccianti avventizi, workers assumed during peak periods in the agricultural cycle, many of whom were women. The head of the boaro family was paid a salary but still had a share of the product and was held responsible for the farm. The semi-permanent workers were paid wages. These workers prepared the soil and carried out all machine operations, but for the manual jobs the land was divided into so many lots called tornature which were assigned to the individual braccianti avventizi who received a share of the product or a daily wage, depending on the crop. Soon, many of these jobs would become mechanized and the braccianti on these capitalist farms would be almost entirely pushed off the lands that they, with the sweat of their brows, had helped to render productive.

Aside from size, the major difference between the mezzadria system and that of the boaria was that the capitalist entrepreneur, unlike the old padrone, retained the total right to arrange both labor and production. The workers, stripped of their rights to the land, worked for a share of the product only when that was convenient to the entrepreneur (in which cases it was undoubtedly unbeneificial to the workers). Capitalist entrepreneurs felt no obligation to the large number of workers who were still needed during brief periods of the year. The characteristic of chronic seasonal unemployment came to be
firmly entrenched with the so-called "advancement" of agricultural methods in Ravenna's larga.

In those areas where tenant farming was already established, reorganization into the new capitalist type of farm would mean to waste considerable expenses that had already been put into the family-sized units. In addition, the transition to the capitalist type farm in the appoderata would not necessarily have increased the productivity of agriculture, a productivity which was built upon a diversified, labor intensive system of cultivation. Unlike the larga, the appoderata was well-suited to the development of a wide variety of specialized high income labor intensive crops. The secret ability of the outdated tenant farming system to continue to compete with the new capitalist farms was that modernizing, more intensive systems of agriculture in the appoderata required the tenant family to contribute more tools, capital, and labor (Armuzzi, 1941:23).

While the capitalist farm was developing in the larga, concentrating upon crops requiring fewer "arms"—forage and sugar beets in addition to the traditional cereals—the tenant families in the appoderata were called upon to contribute ever-increasing quantities of labor. One case of a single farm of 20 hectares worked by the same family from 1860 to 1920 illustrates the development occurring in the appoderata. In 1860 there were six members of the family who worked and there were 12 heads of cattle. There were 1,551 days of labor put into those 20 hectares. The tenant's half of the year-end product was sold for 7,152.20 lire ($2,860) with expenses of 1,117.67 lire
($1,653), leaving 3,017 lire ($1,207) for the family, or 503 lire ($201) for each of the six working members. In 1910, the number of workers increased to 10, and there were 20 heads of cattle. The days of work increased to 2,825. While each member of the family earned a mere 583 lire ($232), the share of the owner increased from 3,017 lire to 5,839 lire ($2,335) (Landi, unpublished paper: 14-16). Although the real value of the money is difficult to determine and it is not known how many tenant farms were owned by the landlord, it is evident that improved agricultural methods led to a doubling of profits for the owner and a doubling of labor for the tenant family.

Two distinct types of agriculture were developing on the Ravenna plain, one which absorbed labor in the appoderata and the other which became increasingly capital-intensive in the larga. The tenants gradually purchased land in the appoderata even though it was twice as expensive as land in the larga because it was so well suited to diversified labor intensive agriculture. Over two-thirds of the reclaimed land in the county of Ravenna (which was the basis for the new monocrop capital intensive agriculture) had been reclaimed at the expense of the state with the understanding that the private owners should complete the development of the land in such a way as to benefit the whole population. However, the private owners failed to do this, and it became necessary for the braccianti themselves through the vehicle of the developing collectives to carry out the intensification and diversification of agricultural production in the larga. In the meantime, as sources of employment dried up along with the land in the
larga, braccianti turned toward the intensifying appoderata in their never ending quest for employment.

The tenant farms in the appoderata had for many years provided a portion of the yearly employment for the braccianti, the wages going to the braccianti coming out of the tenant family's share of the final product. The tenant farmers probably realized that they were paying braccianti more than they received per hour of their own labor, although the significant difference between the two classes was in the greater amount of work done by the tenants rather than the rate of pay. Unlike the tendency in the larga, the introduction of labor saving devices did not decrease the need for labor in the appoderata but freed labor which was put into other crops. When the tenants not only began to use machines but to practice exchange labor among themselves to avoid hiring braccianti, the braccianti's hatred was focussed upon this other exploited class. The conflict between tenants and braccianti occurred mainly over the introduction of the threshing machines. The tenants saw the machines as saving them from having to hire outside labor and the braccianti struggled to prohibit the machines from being used. In the town of Longastrino, there were reports of "braccianti sons rising up against their mezzadri fathers" (Mazzoni, 1946:63).

Clashes between these two classes of rural cultivators, one associated with the larga and the other confined to the appoderata, dominated Romagnol history during the first decade of the 20th century. The tenants, who were gradually becoming owner operators identified
with the Republican Party while the braccianti increased the feeling of brotherhood with each other and identified increasingly with radical anarchist, socialist, and communist ideological currents.

The human history of Ravenna can be summed up in a few words: the struggle of the people to find security on their native land. For the persistent tenant farmers, this security was purchased at usurious rates: land paid for with borrowed money at 25% interest, paying four times the price the speculator paid the nobility who had hastened to unload the land fearing its outright seizure by the braccianti (Porsini, 1966:230).

For the braccianti, "security" was elusive and became a reality only when the Ravenna worker organizations and collectives developed the power required to force the landowners and the municipality to rent and sell land to the braccianti collectives. If it had been another region of Italy, the braccianti would have chaotically abandoned their homes and relatives, ending up in Milan, Germany, New York or elsewhere. Ravenna's braccianti, in fact, did emigrate to find work but as organized groups and not as individuals. Ironically, they found work in areas of Italy that had been depopulated as a result of people leaving to find work. However, the greatest part of the energy of Ravenna's braccianti was turned toward the collective acquisition and development of land in their own larga.

That zone was destined to remain predominately the zone of the large farm; that is until the 1950's when the government, in a great leap backward, divided part of it into family farms in a pitiful
attempt at agrarian reform reminiscent of the practice of dividing this land into tenant farms which ended before 1900. One recipient of the agrarian reform, an ex-tenant farmer, said "Here we cannot make a living. We ought to give this land to the braccianti collective who could get more out of it than we can". The land he is speaking about is part of a large tract of land at the mouth of the Lamone River. The Lamone lands are not suited to the economy of the family farm; but according to Nullo Baldini, it was the Lamone River and the earth deposited at its mouth which was responsible for the success of collective farming in Ravenna:

Of course you ought to erect a monument, but not to me. To whom then? To the Lamone, the beneficent Lamone.

--Nullo Baldini in L'Avanti, March 1945
CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLLECTIVES

Today the idea of acquiring greater political liberty no longer excites the popular classes; economic emancipation is the flag they rally around in some places in great contingents...collective ownership of the land and of the instruments of production: that's the program!

--Sig. Codronchi, the Italian Parliament, 1884
(Salvaoco, 1957:210)

Survival by Mutual Aid (1880-1884)

The developing agricultural economy of Ravenna was converting a medieval system into a modern one, by conservation and land improvements, and in the process the beleaguered peasants were being denied the life-giving access to the rambling pastures, the watercourses, and the firewood that kept their huts warm in the clammy Ravenna cold. The ancient agricultural life-style that had made it possible for them to survive was now in grave crisis, and the melancholy life of the braccianti has been sharply described by Jacini in the Agrarian Inquest. The development of new lands by these "modern improvements" raised the problem of control and exploitation. Management of the new lands under the traditional tenant farming system would have been too costly for owners and too unprofitable for tenant families; but the management of the land by the capitalists aggravated the misery of the continually growing mass of agricultural laborers. This dilemma provided receptive ground for the germination of socialist ideas, ideas brought to Ravenna from the Paris Commune via the Bakuninist and Internationalist movements and their Italian leader, Andrea Costa.
In an open letter "To my Friends of Romagna" from Andrea Costa, founder of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Romagna (later to merge with the national Socialist Party), the goal of a "communist anarchy" was criticized as being too uncertain, too distant to be relevant to the masses. According to Costa, the anarchists had lost sight of reality:

We isolated ourselves too much and we preoccupied ourselves much more with the logic of our own ideas...rather than with the study of the economic and moral conditions of the people and with their heartfelt and immediate needs...(Gonzales, 1972:16).

As a result of that letter, a clandestine congress of the party held in Rimini in 1881 adopted a resolution proposing a concrete program for organizing unions and worker's associations in city and countryside on a class basis which would show "the good effects of association...(and) the necessity to apply association to all the needs of life" (Nardi, 1966:392). Among the long list of strategies proposed by Socialists to organize the population was the promotion of local circles (circoli) in each neighborhood for the purpose of political discussion and education.

It is remarkable how the impact of this document, surprisingly written nearly a century ago in rural Ravenna, is still felt in every sector of the economy and how it even describes the social life of the local people, a large number of whom belong either to collectives or labor cooperatives and get together every evening to discuss national and international politics as well as community affairs. It all began with the constitution of a shoemaker's cooperative in Ravenna.
in the beginning of the year 1883. This was followed on April 8 of the same year by the organization that would become famous as the first collective among rural workers, the General Association of Day Laborers of the Municipality of Ravenna (Associazione Generale degli Operai Braccianti del Comune di Ravenna).

Andrea Costa and the Revolutionary Sociality Party of Romagna deserve the credit for envisioning a network of worker associations organized on a class and professional basis and a society based upon small local associations of educated political beings; but the actual realization of these objectives could never have come about through manipulation from above and required a wider base of support than the young Revolutionary Socialist Party was capable of providing. For a brief point in history around the tenuous beginnings of the cooperative movement, strains of thought stemming from the Republican Party and its founder Mazzini converged with certain branches of the Revolutionary Socialist Party to form a hybrid, but more hardy, local variety of socialism. Originally important characteristics of the cooperative movement in Ravenna, the concerns for "mutual aid", education, and for peaceful social transformation while respecting the rights of capital have their roots in Republican and not Socialist thought. Before the ideas of Marx, Bakunin and the Internationalists were widely known, non-ideologically based mutual aid societies had been developing in Romagna for quite some time. In Ravenna alone, there were 8 mutual aid societies with 2,376 members by 1870 (Rava, 1873:12).
As a result of mounting hostility between braccianti and padroni, organizations of mutual aid were formed in each rural town throughout the province of Ravenna immediately prior to and following the development of the Association. In the town of Conselice, for example, there was the Agricultural Society for Male Mutual Aid (Società Agraria di Mutuo Soccorso maschile) formed in 1877 and followed shortly after by an analogous society for females. These mutual aid societies asked padroni to raise wages: "We respectfully request your excellency to authorize your agents to raise the daily wage in the rice fields to the rate of nearby towns that are above one lira (approximately 40 USA cents)" (Dirani, 1957:150); they also requested public works for the construction of canals, the utility of which padroni, government, and braccianti were in agreement; and, when all else failed, the mutual aid societies called for strikes and demonstrations in the local piazze. These organizations were a good beginning in dealing with the plight of the farmworkers, but they were not enough in a situation in which the state of unemployment was due to gaps in income:

...even though the sources of employment were jobs that only in small part concerned the cultivation of agricultural enterprises, the character of these jobs was such as to request a maximum number of "arms" in summer months (translation mine) (Nardi, 1965:194).

The meager, seasonal nature of employment opportunities meant that strikes and agitations could only do so much to alleviate the situation. Sometimes the results of these agitations were tragic: in 1890 one man and two women shot dead in the piazza in Conselice plus 15 or
16 wounded who managed to run away (Dirani, 1957:153). The result of this understandably desperate tactic was not more work or better pay, but the jailing of 8 men, 3 women, and a wounded boy.

The General Association of Day Laborers was unique in that it was the first organization developed specifically to deal with the causes of misery in a creative, constructive way. The immediate impetus for the meeting of 303 braccianti that evening of April 8, 1883, was the failure to achieve any increase in pay as a result of a strike on a land works project at a place called Fosso Vecchio on the outskirts of the city of Ravenna. It became apparent to the braccianti that they suffered from such low wages partially as a result of the parasitic labor contractor middleman and this meeting resulted in the formation of the Association.

The original scope of the Association, led by the moderate socialists Nullo Baldini and Armando Armuzzi, both followers of Costa but only one (Armuzzi) who was an agricultural worker, was essentially that of assuming contracts for labor directly, providing for an equal distribution of labor and a more just remuneration. The statute of the General Association of Day Laborers of Ravenna provided for "the constitution of a social fund which will enable the assumption of the majority of public and private works...(to) make a first step along the road to emancipation" (Berselli, 1966:16); it further required that every member should buy a share of 25 lire ($10) payable over a period of 25 months; and the members decided that, in order to attain the esteem of the wider society, the association should concern itself
exclusively with problems of labor and avoid political attachments of any kind.

According to Baldini, unionization alone was not enough to solve the problems of labor and neither was the political and/or revolutionary struggle. To insure the development of a truly socialist future it was necessary that the working class begin to create it within their midst by developing associations of mutual assistance and ingrafting in their consciousnesses a genuine concern for each others' well-being (Berselli, 1966:90).

Curiously like the philosophy of the Populist movement in America, Baldini identified the entrepreneur contractor as the conveyor of capitalism and exploitation, as the cause of the disruption between landlord and sharecropper and state and braccianti. It should be noted in fairness to Baldini's philosophy that he was aware that the elimination of the middleman was only the "first step" in the remedy of unemployment. Perhaps there were impelling reasons why he did not outline comprehensive steps for future, more radical actions. In effect, Baldini's ideas made strange bedfellows with various ideological sorts: first the landed aristocracy in Ravenna who considered both socialism and capitalism to be their enemies (Salvaco, 1965:176); then also the anarchist, revolutionary, and utopian currents of the young Revolutionary Socialist Party; and finally the moderate Republican philosophy that denounced any type of political involvement and set forth self-help and self-education as the important factors in progress.
As soon as the Association was formed in 1883 it was practically inevitable that they would ask the city to grant them a contract to do the work which had to be done in the devastated pine forest between the Lamone River and the sea. The winter of 1879 had been especially severe; and, owing to the way in which the land of the public domain had been misused in the past, the forest had virtually vanished and the roots of the dying pine trees stood decaying in the stagnant water. It was clear that the pine forest area was in desperate need of either being reclaimed for agricultural use which would benefit those who were "condemned to a half year of forced unemployment" (Berselli, 1966:32) or be reforested as it had been in its natural state pleasing artists, writers, and hunters (there were no environmentalists as such then; perhaps only simple nature lovers). In the years following that winter, proposals about the two alternatives were passionately argued back and forth. The municipality had repossessed part of the immense territory that had been entrusted to Baron Belluzzi-Pergami (it seems that they also threw him in jail for his part in the destruction of the pineta); the decision was made to revoke pasture rights to public lands; and it was finally decided in 1883 to reclaim 900 hectares, reforest 1900 hectares, and put the remaining 600 hectares to a combination of wet and dry crops (Bertondini, 1966:288). Landowners who had important connections to the local government and who feared the unrest of the braccianti favored the extension of these and other public works jobs as well as the granting of credit to the Association as a means of controlling it from the outside. The Association received
the support of philanthropists, both liberals and conservatives, who saw it as an antidote to agitations and socialism.

**Foreign Expeditions (1884-1900)**

Not even a year had passed when, in the first months of 1884, the national government put the colossal jobs of reclaiming swamplands of Maccarese, Camposalino, Ostia, and Isola Sacra near Rome up for bid. As the Ravenna braccianti were still desperately short of work, it was on the suggestion of Armuzzi that the Association negotiated and won a subcontract for the labor on a project at Ostia, worth 6 million lire (2.4 million dollars). Amid great fanfare, the whole city—a band, the city council, the Mayor, and Andrea Costa—gathered to see off the 500 men and 50 women who departed by train for the swamps of Ostia on the morning of November 4, 1884. Countess Pasolini donated money for drugs to fight malaria, and the King made an interest free loan of 10,000 lire, approximately $4,000 or $7 per person.

Upon their arrival in Rome, the authorities made them remain closed in the train and keep moving because they were thought to be subversive. Once they reached Ostia, they found "silence, desolation, and ruin" (Nardi, 1966:417). The zone was deserted, except for a few yellow faces devastated by malaria, among them a caretaker who greeted them with the words "Unfortunate ones! You came here to die!" (Emiliani, 1965:226). Enthusiasm was soon replaced by fear; and, until Armuzzi spoke to the group in the bruising and emotional Romagnol dialect of the hunger and unemployment waiting at home (not to mention the embarassment of returning home after they had been seen off by
the band), many thought of returning home that first night before the disease could take its toll. The next morning, "the noise of the wheelbarrows resounded on the banks of the canals and popular Romagnol songs greeted the rising sun" (Emiliani, 1965:226).

Grave problems were nevertheless brewing and there were even threats of outright revolt against the Association. Accusations that Armuzzi took the government's money to bring the Romagnols to die in a far away concentration camp and other problems, however, did not prevent the angry, motley crews of Ravenna braccianti from travelling to Ostia for a total of 7 years in a row. The communal type of organization they had initially attempted (wearing T-shirts with "Braccianti Association" written on them and living together with 50 women to take care of the 500 men) made them feel like they were in a forced labor camp and was soon abandoned. The cornerstone upon which the Ravenna collective movement was erected was not communalism, but was expressed more in the recognition by everyone of the responsibility of the collective to provide assistance to the families of the hundreds of workers struck down by malaria at Ostia (Nardi, 1965:194). On these jobs, there was one rate of pay and those who were sick and couldn't work received the same wage as the others. In the first year alone there were more than 100 deaths. Today, old people still talk about the men leaving their families for the long journey to Ostia each year. They still know who died there. It was the critical historical point at which the main principles of the collective movement in
Ravenna crystallized. The epigraph on Armuzzi's grave sums up the Ostia experience well:

A peaceful army--From the sweet fields of Romagna--
Went there--To redeem for agriculture and health--
For a new civilization--Sod that the old civilization left in ruin...(Berselli, 1966:37).

Ostia was no utopia, but utopia was not what the members were expecting to find. The utopian tendencies of Baldini and Armuzzi, who organized the experiment following the model of the Icaria colony, were tempered by the realism of Costa, and all knew that failure there could have reverted the young Association back to the point of departure or worse. Fortunately for the Association, the definition of "success" was modest and the tenacious braccianti endured overwhelming hardships. They had demonstrated their ability to assume public works contracts, and the Romagna power structure came to think of temporary emigration as a security valve for the entire peasant class.

Although public works were the financial basis of the young Association, they were never enough to provide more than temporary support and they were never funded without a struggle. The braccianti and their Association can be credited with both stimulating and carrying out important jobs which would eventually make Ravenna one of the most productive agricultural zones in Italy. If other areas of Italy which were poorer than Ravenna and in more need of public works got less, it was because workers were less organized and less insistent than they were in Ravenna.

In the 18 years from 1862-1879, the state had financed public works in Ravenna spending an average of 195,168 lire ($78,067) per
year. After the agricultural crisis, braccianti had to organize to force the issue of public works. While from 1880-1895 the average expenditure of the state had dropped to 163,654 lire ($55,462), it fell to 91,968 lire ($36,786) in the period from 1890 to 1895 (Nardi, 1966:399,457). Large works to regulate the rivers on Ravenna's low plain were approved and promised but not carried out. In 1885, as a result of pressure by the braccianti organized through the Association, the city of Ravenna filled the gap left by the state by providing 426,342 lire ($170,537) of public works jobs to build streets, bridges, canals, sewers, and a new port. This averages out to about $15 in public works per bracciatante, or about 15 days of work each. For a government that had no social welfare aid at all, the expense was not that great. Only those works that were so urgent that it would be technically dangerous to put off were approved (Porsini, 1966:251) and those jobs that were funded were "insufficient, badly paid... (and) pulled out by the teeth after unnerving waiting" (Berselli, 1966:33). Not including works financed by city and province, the conservative estimate of 4 million dollars of state money spent in public works projects over a 43 year period in Ravenna from 1862 to 1905 would average out to three to four hundred dollars per bracciatante for the entire period.

Obviously, braccianti could not depend entirely upon public works jobs. So, contemporaneously with these first jobs, the Association rented two farms from the municipality of Ravenna in 1885 and 1888. These were the first experiments in collective renting and
agricultural production, and they yielded dubious results. Against Costa's advice, land was divided into individual units and was rotated among members, each of whom exploited his one hectare plot to the fullest before turning it over to the next. Not all braccianti even wanted to return to cultivating the land, feeling that it was not their profession. It is ironic that these reluctant agricultural collectives, whose purpose was merely to provide auxiliary employment for braccianti during idle periods inbetween other jobs, should become so much more successful than the noble attempts by utopian planners elsewhere in the world, and succeed in a hostile capitalist economy where collectives in socialist economies have failed.

In 1882, Costa became the first socialist to be elected to the Italian parliament. Notwithstanding repeated criticisms of the Association by other Socialists who called the braccianti "the King's Socialists" and which resulted in the eventual ouster of Baldini from the party in 1900, Costa's support for the Association was unwavering. He had no utopian illusions about it, but simply felt that whatever could be done to improve conditions for the braccianti was worthwhile. Singlehandedly and doggedly he fought for laws and public contracts that would be in the interest of the Association. Despite the mutual disfavor that developed between Baldini and the Socialists who Baldini thought "occupied (themselves) only with the future of socialism... (and) betrayed the immediate needs of the population" (Berselli, 1966:47), Baldini and Costa never lost their respect for each other.
Labor cooperatives modeled on the same principles and goals as the Association sprang up all over the province and neighboring provinces as a result of first, the stimulus of the example provided by Ravenna's braccianti, secondly because of the ever deepening agricultural crisis, and finally stimulated by an 1889 law pushed through by Costa which conceded notable advantages to labor cooperatives in public works. Often, the labor cooperatives were grafted onto the pre-existing trunk of the mutual aid societies. In a few years the membership of the Ravenna Association had reached 2,557 and the next largest was that of Conselice with 683 members. All were based upon the "conquest of sources of labor, its equal distribution, and its just remuneration" (Nardi, 1965:195). Even smaller cooperatives of bricklayers, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, craftsmen, and construction workers copied the form developed by the braccianti. By 1886, there were four cooperative banks in the province.

As the movement grew and competition for jobs developed, it became increasingly necessary to develop bonds between the different labor cooperatives in Ravenna and in the neighboring provinces which would regulate competition and at the same time enable them to achieve more contractual power in the assumption of important jobs. The first consortia of cooperatives arose for specific jobs on a temporary basis and dissolved when they were no longer needed. It was through these consortia of cooperatives that some jobs, among them the building of a railroad in Greece, were assumed after 1890.
The necessity of going to Greece was a reflection of a worsening situation at home. In addition to the nadir of the agricultural crisis, the introduction of monstrous new threshing machines in the summer of 1888 was the beginning of new reductions in the already scarce employment of braccianti. Economic changes which were shaking the country as a whole were the fall of agricultural prices, new high protectionist tariffs in 1887, a commercial war with France, high taxes, high prices for housing, inflation, and near ruin of currency and banking systems. At the death of Depretis, Italy made a move to the right with the advent of Crispi as minister, and Baldini and others landed in jail. Public works were interrupted, and the struggle for
employment turned away from the unyielding, repressive state and toward the local owners of land. In 1890, the killings at Conselice took place; there was an uninterrupted succession of strikes and agitations especially in the north of the province caused by the lack of labor; and, in the spring of 1898, 7,500 braccianti gathered on the banks of the Lamone near the town of Mezzano and threatened to sack Ravenna.

These were dark years for the cooperative movement. There was an ever-decreasing number of jobs, and even the Ostia experiment was operating at a loss. The Grecian expedition was a financial disaster for the movement; this time no one could talk the braccianti into remaining and the labor cooperatives were not even paid for work that was completed. Baldini at this time took firmer control of the Association, relieving Armuzzi of the most responsible position. In a letter to Costa, Baldini suggested that the Association should concentrate upon soliciting jobs in their native Romagna:

It is better that (the braccianti) reserve their vigor for the economic redemption of their own country rather than go to foreign countries, far away, where they are at the mercy of speculators without any defense whatsoever (translation mine) (Nardi, 1965:194).

Pressure for Public Works (1900-1906)

At the end of the century, the vast larga had not yet begun to reach its full potential in terms of agricultural production. Individual braccianti came to the same conclusion as Baldini did, namely that they should remain and fight for the development of the low plain. Workers who had taken advantage of an offer of reduced train rates to go elsewhere in search of labor found low wages and an
oversupply of labor wherever they went and requested to return home (Porsini, 1966:253). Unfortunately, unemployment was so severe at home that a small job contracted to the Association in 1900 for the building of a street had to be abandoned because, where only 100 workers were needed, 1,600 showed up. Baldini wrote to Costa that if something wasn't done within a week to assure jobs there would be grave disturbances. The workers, he said, "are striking not to increase pay but to obtain their turn to work... (since) two thirds of our workers are unemployed" (Berselli, 1966:48).

At this point, Baldini renewed his earlier conviction that a solution to the unemployment problem was a return to the land as sharecroppers. The association, he reasoned, could rent that part of the destroyed San Vitale pine forest belonging to the city which had previously been reclaimed. There were too many braccianti to divide it up into family farms (even if the whole larga were divided up it could have supported only 2 thousand families and there were over 7,000 braccianti families); so, once the land was rented it was divided into one hectare plots and assigned to individual braccianti for three years in the same manner as had been used in the two previous attempts at collective renting. Costa's suggestion to work the land undivided with unified management was this time heeded in part insofar as all tools, machines, and animals belonged to the Association. Crop plans were still left up to the individual members. The results of this second attempt were better than the first; in the short run those one
hectare plots meant food on the table, but in the long run they did little to check the worsening situation for braccianti.

The cooperative movement was entering a new century with a dubious future. Jobs were distributed to non-members as well as members to avoid creating intra-class distinctions, and there was no reason for anyone to join. The fact was that the labor cooperatives were not meeting the growing needs of the braccianti. The period of transition between old and new forms of agriculture was essentially finished, agricultural production sharply increased in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century due to the use of chemical fertilizers and machines, and the firm rooting of the new capitalist system called for new, more effective forms of worker organization. The turn of the century saw the development of the local Labor Bureaus (Camere del Lavoro) with hiring halls (Ufficio Collocamento di Lavoro) and of new, more radical workers' organizations outside the cooperatives: unions and leagues of resistance. Some even said that the presence of cooperatives impeded the development of more advanced forms of defense of the working classes. Braccianti themselves in several places began to criticize the apolitical nature of their own labor cooperatives (Berselli, 1966:44) which in the early years had depended upon loans from local banks and subsidies from and appeals to the hearts and purse strings of the bourgeoisie. A new page was turned in the history of the Ravenna braccianti, a new level of class consciousness was developing. From now on, if cooperatives were to survive they would have to be linked together with labor unions and the Socialist Party.
For the first time in Ravenna, the union organizations stated the goals of the new workers' movement as follows:

small improvements are not the goal of the workers' organizations...complete emancipation is only possible with the collectivization of the land (translation mine) (Nardi, 1966:478).

Even before the turn of the century, the braccianti of Ravenna had grouped together spontaneously whenever there had been a common interest to defend: a strike, a demonstration in the piazza or on a farm. Sticking together, they stripped the owners of the right to impose low salaries and long hours. The Labor Allocation Office would now take away the right of owners to hire only those braccianti who were strong or easy to control. Where braccianti in the rest of Italy were still being hired individually each morning in the local piazza, Ravenna braccianti were assigned their "turn" by the union officials. One historian, Luigi Preti, says that dependence upon union leaders for work instead of as before upon the padrone created a highly disciplined work force (1955:244). This discipline was invaluable in the struggle against large landowners for the rates and conditions of agricultural work; no worker could go to work anywhere without the permission of the union. In addition to union discipline, the research of their own employment outside of the capitalist farm via labor cooperatives greatly enhanced the bargaining power of the braccianti class.

Increased militancy and organization into unions forced the issue of larger governmental commitment to the regulation of rivers of the larga, a promise which had been made years before. The dark years
of the Crispi regime gave way to the somewhat more enlightened Giolotti era which would last from the beginning of the 20th century to the first world war, during which time the province of Ravenna would become one of the most productive agricultural zones in the country. For Giolotti:

public works represented...a surrogate for social legislation for the regulation and the introduction of labor contracts and arbitration for rural workers which had been introduced for other workers ...(and) the policy of public works was also a stimulus to the economic development of the country (translation mine) (Nardi, 1966:514).

Finally, laws of March and July 1902 provided for the reconstruction of the banks of two rivers in Ravenna on a heretofore unknown scale.

The prospectives for public contracts breathed new life into the labor cooperatives. Promoted by the local socialist and labor union run Labor Bureau, the Federation of Cooperatives, which had been dormant since its formation in 1896 when the public works had been promised, was formed anew "to avoid competition (between cooperatives) while maintaining the autonomy of each society...and regulating between them the distribution of state jobs" (Nardi, 1966:196). Nine cooperatives of braccianti, three of bricklayers, one of carpenters, and one of masons representing 6,000 workers participated in the formation of the Federation and soon there were a total of 44 member cooperatives. There was a resistance on the part of some of the larger labor cooperatives (including the Ravenna Association) to joining the Federation; these objected to the loss of power to make independent contracts which had sometimes in the past led to the exploitative
subcontracting of jobs by one cooperative to another (Nardi, 1966:486-487).

With the Federation, efficiency of technical and administrative services to individual cooperatives increased, the growth of new smaller cooperatives was encouraged on a local basis, and membership was encouraged by giving members first choice for work. The excavation and rebuilding of the banks on the right of the Reno River (which would render 33,000 hectares of land in the north of the province productive) and that of the Lama (which would release 8,000 hectares of land previously invaded by water) began in 1903 (Nardi, 1966:435). Although private landowners were required by the government to pay 1/5 of the cost, they ended up benefiting to the tune of 63,520,000 lire, or 25.4 million dollars of government money as a result of increased land and productive values (Cabiati, 1911:36). The jobs were carried out primarily in winter to relieve unemployment and they employed some 4,000 men daily for four months. Since cooperatives were only permitted by law to take contracts not exceeding 100,000 lire, the Federation assumed the form of a commercial company to be eligible for these contracts. As a result, it made profits which, instead of going to individual cooperatives or to workers, went into this coordinating body for the good of future cooperation in Ravenna (Nardi, 1966:489). The Federation developed a centralized organization capable of coordinating and administrating enormous enterprises, but it probably would have never done so without these two initial government contracts.

The new jobs, brought to fruition as a direct result of the agitations of the young union organizations, led to the conviction among
many braccianti that the problem of unemployment would be relieved through collective insistence upon "all or none", an increase in wages, and a reduction of the work day from 8 to 6 hours so that all could share equally in work. For this, braccianti went on strike against their own labor cooperatives. The new jobs also brought into light the natural differences between workers, some who couldn't keep pace with others on the exhausting treks back and forth and up and down the banks of rivers pushing heavy, dirt-filled wheelbarrows. Labor cooperative and union leaders joined together to mediate struggles within the braccianti class between those who would favor a "natural selection" of the strongest workers with a piece work system and those who insisted on equal wages for weak and strong alike.

The official position of the Socialist Party on cooperatives was at best ambivalent and at worst negative, especially where Baldini was concerned. When it came to settling disputes among the members (who were not always united in their support of the party), Baldini was recognized to be a tremendous asset to the movement. As a whole, the cooperative movement counted upon many skilled and dedicated leaders who shared the goal of socialism but had different ideas of how to attain it. Despite his ideological weaknesses, there appears to be widespread agreement regarding Baldini's entrepreneurial ability, which it is said could have made him one of the richest men in Italy if it were not used for the good of the braccianti. Other ideallistically motivated leaders from the Socialist Party and labor unions also put a great deal of effort into the development of cooperatives, and their personal sacrifices were readily apparent to everyone. Although
it was suggested at one point that the party be given direct control of unions and cooperatives, this never happened. "Municipalismo" (the strategy used by these three autonomous but complimentary organizations of confining their actions to struggle on the municipal level), proved to be more effective than a hierarchical party-dominated machine in the aiding and abetting of the development of a network of workers' cooperatives. The result was a phenomenon which has been called "municipal socialism" (Procacci, 1964:73).

An extremely effective partnership developed between labor unions and labor cooperatives. Jobs were approved by government following union agitations and were assumed by cooperatives. In the first five years of the century, an average of 648,754 lire ($259,502) per year was spent by the state in public works in Ravenna (Nardi, 1966:493). The city and province also funded additional public works and virtually all public jobs--streets, buildings, water works, port jobs, and reclamation works--were assumed by the cooperative movement. From 1904 to 1908, the Federation assumed 3.5 million dollars in public and private contracts (Nardi, 1966:509). The labor cooperatives were accused of creating a monopoly of labor; and the government, at this time in the liberal hands of Giolotti, of stifling private enterprise. No one had complained that the public financing of land reclamation on privately-owned lands during the last century had stifled private initiative. The criticisms levelled against cooperatives and government in the unique case of Ravenna were unjustified. On a national level, two-thirds of all public works from 1888 to 1907 were carried out by private companies and no one accused the Italian "robber barons" of
living off of governmental subsidies (Nardi, 1966:512). The fact was that in Ravenna labor cooperatives had become so efficient that, with the help of the unions, they either underbid the private companies or used their monopoly over labor to otherwise eliminate them from public jobs. Imagine the consternation of two private contractors in Ravenna who managed to get contracts, one for the construction of a segment of a railroad and the other for a jute factory, when the union demanded an immediate increase in wages and the jobs had to be abandoned (Nardi, 1966:508). Few would find anything at all strange or unusual about a reversal of this story with labor getting shafted.

The strength of the cooperative movement was not only a result of the support of the unions. The highly centralized organization built by the leaders of the Federation was just as efficient as any capitalist counterpart in achieving its goals. Instead of capital, the cooperative movement's main resource was labor, and instead of profit the goal of the cooperative movement was and still is work, its fair distribution and its just remuneration. The types of public works jobs given to labor cooperatives were those based primarily upon labor with the largest amount of funds being used to pay wages; but the Federation nevertheless did not renounce its share of profits won through the labor of generations of braccianti. Some local jobs were subcontracted to individual cooperatives on the basis of the number of members for which the Federation received payment for administration and 2.5% of the profits. On other jobs, the Federation and an individual cooperative could enter a partnership in which case profits were split in half. For jobs outside the province, the Federation
would be the direct manager and would take all the profits. Labor unions among peasants have all over the world suffered from lack of funds and difficulty in getting poor members to pay dues, but in Ravenna this problem was ameliorated somewhat since one percent of the profits of all jobs was contributed to the Labor Bureau. Another unique aspect of cooperation in Ravenna is that from the beginning cooperatives have been operated like private enterprises paying union wages. The rigid policy of capitalization was what enabled the research and development of new, more lasting and secure sources of employment.

Despite the notable increase in public works which had stretched the state budget to its maximum in the first five years of the century, unemployment was still a problem. After many successful battles in the agricultural sector at the beginning of the century, the workers' movement was experiencing defeats as well:

Even some union victories ended up by giving economically negative results, insofar as the landowners reacted either by reducing the employment of manpower or by substituting tenant farming for the system of wage labor (translation mine) (Petri, 1955:316).

The counteroffensive by large growers was particularly damaging in the low plain where the agricultural machine became an unfeeling and invincible "scab". Where the growers did not reintroduce tenant farming, they reduced the need for manpower by introducing extensive crops and raising productivity chiefly through "employing" chemical fertilizers and machines. A governmental inquest on unemployment in 1903
revealed that the 13,500 braccianti in Ravenna were in need of 908,183 days of work in order to assure that each would work 180 days per year. The union organizations saw to it that the problem was no longer low wages but they could do little about the lack of work (Nardi, 1966: 494–495); and the government was not about to foot a bill for 11 million lire (4.4 million dollars) a year to keep braccianti from Ravenna and neighboring provinces employed.

Notwithstanding the past negative results of Ostia and Greece, the Ravenna braccianti again turned toward temporary emigration, this time organized through the Federation. In 1902 the Federation took on works of land reclamation in the region of Puglia which turned out to be profitable. There were unending discussions about how to make the cooperative movement more self-sufficient. Suggestions were made to shift the onus of providing jobs from the state to the private sector and to return to the land via collective renting. The research of new sources of labor led to the pressuring of private landowners who held the land in a state of semi-abandonment to invest in improvements and intensification of production. A bitter struggle began between braccianti and tenant farmers to attain the right to do all the jobs that took place outside the farms such as transport and crew work done by exchange labor among tenant families. Braccianti tested their newfound collective strength in the attempts to forbid the use of new agricultural technology which robbed them of employment.
**Profits and Progress (1906-1909)**

In 1906, the cooperative movement really went to work. Small labor cooperatives were encouraged to withhold profits made on other jobs from members and use them to rent land. Even those braccianti who had originally objected to returning to the land now wanted to begin managing more of the public lands. The Association had continued to rent the holding of San Vitale belonging to the city with good results. Management had been improved by adopting a unified direction and more and more it was acquiring the characteristics of a real agricultural enterprise. Spontaneously and outside of any organization, a group of braccianti at Mezzano rented several rice fields in 1903 with the purpose of farming them and eliminating the middleman (Nardi, 1966: 494). This could be taken as a signal—an omen—that the time was ripe for the planting of genuine collective farms in the soil of Ravenna's low plain.

Concerted action by unions, political forces and the Federation of Cooperatives used the monopoly over labor in Ravenna to give new hope to experiments in collective renting and agricultural production which would permanently establish a secure foothold in the local economy for the braccianti class. Experience in organizing economic enterprises, organizing labor, and working together in public works was invaluable in the development of collective farming. New associations were formed to begin the collective farms. Differing from the earlier experiments in collective renting, the new farms were real agricultural enterprises and not merely stop-gap measures to combat
seasonal unemployment on an individual basis. In 1907, the first real collective farms arose at Campiano, Piangipane, and Mezzano. Land was rented from both public and private sources. The experiments were promoted by the Federation and were put under guidance of Nullo Baldini and the technological expertise of Dario Guzzini. These set off a chain reaction, and in 1908, 1909, and 1910, collective farms arose at San Stefano, San Alberto, Santerno, Savarna, Alfonsine, Voltana, Longastrino, and Castiglione di Cervia.

Production on these first real collectives was organized rationally with a single plan for the whole farm as Costa had suggested. Ordinarily, they were open to all workers belonging to the local braccianti league and had no limit in number so as to avoid the formation of a nucleus of privileged workers. Since there were so many members with respect to the amount of land that was rented, members took turns working on the collective and the rest of the time worked on private farms and in public works jobs. Part of the members' salary (sometimes 50%) could be withheld to cover financial needs of the collective, and the willingness to sacrifice for collectives is best described as remarkable. Members appealed to each other's sense of pride, and all contributed labor gratis to improve the farms, building barns, offices, digging drainage ditches, and doing general maintenance. It was the job of the collective to assure that all braccianti had an equal number of days of work per year, but so long as the amount of land rented was small, collectives could not eliminate the dependence of braccianti on private farms. As on
privately-owned farms, collectives had a few full time workers who cared for the cattle and carried out machine operations in the preparation of the soil while the members carried out all of the manual labor which was rotated among them.

One of the first crops the new collectives experimented with was that of rice. They were trying to bring back a crop which had been abandoned by privates to be replaced with the new industrial crops. When this did not prove to be a good idea, collectives switched over to a system of production similar to that used on the private farms. The pattern of labor which emerged on the collectives differed little from that used on the private farms. A system of individual sharecropping (compartecipazione) for grain and sugarbeets and hourly wages for fodder crops was used. Although the Socialists, the union, and the Federation favored wages for all crops, a majority of the braccianti wanted the sharecropping system which would either give them an individual incentive however minimal or (more likely) would simply allow them to work the piece of land whenever it was convenient with the help of other family members. Strangely enough, the adoption of the sharecropping system by the Ravenna collectives actually meant that more of what was produced went into the collective and was not paid to the worker-members and it "permitted the rapid expansion and consolidation of collective renting in Ravenna with respect to other (nearby) provinces" (Nardi, 1966:528).

These growing enterprises formed a lasting basis upon which more land would be gradually added piece by piece, the rented land
eventually being purchased. They had no sooner begun when conflicts between braccianti and tenants over the use of threshing machines erupted which would divide the collective movement into Socialist and Republican camps.

The first contest that had occurred between braccianti and tenants, that of winning the right of transporting agricultural products, was promptly won by the braccianti. The position of the Socialist Party was that the tenant farmers should stick to planting and caring for crops and as soon as crops were ready to be harvested, agricultural activity stops and industrial activity begins. The tenant farmers recognized the strength of the braccianti and reluctantly acquiesced to braccianti demands to unify and make the owners pay the cost of hiring braccianti. The outcome of this first struggle was the agreement that the cost of hiring braccianti would be split between owners and tenant farmers whereas previously the whole cost would have been borne by the tenant farmers. According to Attilio Cabiati, tenant farmers actually benefitted by this because exchange labor meant that too many days were spent away from the farm (1911:9).

Political Splits and Land Acquisition (1909-1914)

In 1909, the first hostilities marked by violence broke out over machines. The cause again was the search for labor on the part of the braccianti organizations. The threshing machines had previously been owned only by the large capitalist farms and now the Republican Party, which felt that the tenants were the ideal solution of "capital and labor in the same hands", proposed the formation of a
cooperative among tenant farmers to obtain the machines (and it might be added to greatly reduce the employment of braccianti). It was not that the braccianti were against machines; they perhaps more than anyone saw that the machines could be used to reduce fatigue and to get the land to produce more. The question was: who would suffer?

Roughly translated, the response of Nullo Baldini to the Republican suggestion reveals his truly socialist feelings:

We have regulations establishing what a cooperative must be in order to be considered genuine. It must be composed exclusively of laborers of a certain class and profession and the profits of the cooperative shall be divided only among the laborers in proportion to the work contributed. What do you tenant farmers propose to do? To constitute a cooperative to acquire machines making others do the labor and dividing the profits among yourselves? Yours is therefore a false cooperation (translation mine) (Berselli, 1966:73).

Unlike other more dogmatic Socialists, Baldini was skillfully diplomatic and he therefore added:

I can see the weak side of my theory. You tenant farmers protest with the reasonable fear that once the braccianti own the machines they will use their power to withhold use of the machines at harvest time to demand higher wages. So, in order to avoid this danger I say we should give the use of the machines to braccianti but the ownership of the machines should rest in a collective entity whether it be the Federation of Cooperatives, the Bureau of Labor, or another body. This body would be the guarantee against selfishness of any one class (translation mine) (Berselli, 1966:73).

Baldini's suggestions were approved, but the ensuing peace between braccianti and tenant farmers was short-lived. When the braccianti demanded an 8 instead of a 10 hour day on the tenant farms as a tactic
to spread out employment and increase remuneration, the negative reaction on the part of the tenant farmers was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Socialists had had enough of the egotism of the tenant farming class. Socialist Party doctrine became rigid in its predication on the class struggle, and it was declared that the mezzadria, a remnant of the feudal system, was obsolete and stood in the way of the socialization of the land.

Just at the time when the labor cooperatives were being transformed into collective farms, they lost the unity which had previously existed between Republicans and Socialists. The Labor Bureau took sides with the braccianti. Republican braccianti took sides with the tenant farmers. Socialist tenant farmers even cut across class lines to take sides with braccianti. The hard won monopoly of labor was broken. Soon there were two Labor Bureaus, a "red" Socialist one and a "yellow" (later "green") Republican one, and there were two cooperative movements who were competing with each other for the acquisition of jobs and land. Of the 67 cooperatives then existing in the province, 35, or nearly all the braccianti labor cooperatives, with 85.6% of all members, remained faithful to the Federation (Nardi, 1966:547). Modeled on the Federation, the Republican cooperative movement formed the Consortium (Consorzio) in 1912. Both coordinated all fields of their respective movements—labor, consumption, and production. The Republican collectives, unlike their Socialist counterparts, in theory were aimed at transforming braccianti into individual farmers. They limited the number of members and required that they be Republicans,
but the organization of Republican collectives in practice remained identical to that of the Socialists.

In 1913, the two movements resolved to quit competing with each other for public jobs and to divide them on the basis of the number of members they had. Numerous important jobs were carried out by both movements: reparation of earthquake damage in Sicily, building of houses, and the usual reclamation jobs done all over Italy.

The agreements reached by Republicans and Socialists on public works didn’t apply to agricultural work or to competition to rent land. The Republicans, with fewer members, cornered the labor market for salaried jobs on private farms. Being eliminated from many agricultural jobs served to accelerate the Socialists’ struggle to rent land themselves. Each movement, trying to outdo the other in providing and controlling of employment, competed for land and drove the rent prices up. Private land was rarely rented to Socialists and all substandard land belonging to the city, hospital, and other semi-public entities was divided equally between Socialists and Republicans, even though Socialists were in the majority.

By 1911, the traveller arriving at the town of Alfonsine in the north of the province could see the braccianti collective at work excavating a new bed for the Senio River. If perchance he were to stop at the "Madonna del Bosco" (Our Lady of the Forest) bridge next to the humble church of the same name, he would be able to see before him on one side the luxuriant green fields of a modern agriculture and on the other the swampy point at which civilization seemed to stop;
anywhere from there on out to the horizon he might have expected to see the head of a dinosaur protruding out of that vast grey empire of stagnant water over which man did not yet reign (Cabiati, 1911:32).

Braccianti labor cooperatives and later collective enterprises were the predominant mechanism through which the dismal larga was gradually being transformed into one of the most productive agricultural zones in Italy. To aid the developing collectives, the Federation developed an agricultural office to provide technical and economic direction to collective farms. Soon the Republican Consortium followed suit. Experiments in collective renting were yielding good results and in 1912 the Federation purchased its first large holding, the Maracabò farm of 950 hectares which was in large part covered by swamp. The braccianti of that zone, one of the most depressed areas in the northern section of the province, began the first work of reclamation on the Maracabò, taking as their salary only the firewood they cleared out. The technique of reclamation by now was modernized. For the first time, machines were used to get rid of the unwanted water. Cultivation of the Maracabò began in 1914. Today the Maracabò makes up most of the San Alberto collective and many of the people who participated in the first unpaid jobs are still members.

The historical fact of the acquisition of such a large piece of land on the part of the Socialist cooperative movement could not possibly go unnoticed. Among other things, local newspapers objected to the fact that the state footed the bill for the reclamation. They said the Federation was exploiting the braccianti making them work for
nothing. Actually, the braccianti via the Federation were now for the first time taking advantage of the laws that privates had used to increase the value of their property. By not taking wages, they hastened the development of the farm into a modern enterprise which gave them work at rising wages for the rest of their lives. Within the Socialist Party, the acquisition of the Maracabò came as a surprise. They had talked about obtaining usufruct rights to public lands or outright seizure, but never purchase.

After the Maracabò, others followed, including the Massari and Rasponi, two very important holdings in Ravenna. Preferably, the land acquired by collectives would be in need of reclamation. The Federation would mobilize the masses, the state would aid in expenses, and new land would be rendered productive. From 1910 to 1915, land managed and owned by the collectives adhering to the Federation went from 1760 to 3150 hectares. This would have been even greater if not for the abandonment of 920 hectares in rice fields. The Consortium began renting and by 1915 managed 1403 hectares of land. The management of land by braccianti collectives was proving to be the best way:

> to achieve the intensification of production and a wider and more stable settlement of workers on the land. (They) demonstrate the superiority of the large farm with collective management over the small farm and individual management...which agricultural science of the day advises (Nardi, 1966:557).

While collectives were struggling to collectively rent and purchase land in the second decade of the 20th century, the tenant farmers were gradually achieving their life long ambitions of purchasing land.
as individuals. On the political front, the struggle between Republicans and Socialists dominated this period. The tenant farmers were convinced that Baldini, who was seeking election to parliament, wanted "to hand them a wheelbarrow", in other words to force them to join the proletariat class. Baldini maintained that on the contrary he wanted to elevate the braccianti to a position of profit sharing on the large private as well as collective farms.

Unlike the tenant farmers, the Republican braccianti were beginning to unify with the Socialist braccianti more often when it came to their common class interests; and in June of 1914, Ravenna was paralyzed by a unified proletariat acting in conjunction with a national week long general strike known as the "Settimana Rossa" (Red Week) during which tens of thousands of strikers came into the city on bicycles to demonstrate, public buildings were seized and burned, railroad and telecommunications were blocked, electricity was cut off, churches were desecrated and the statues were used to barricade the demonstrators against the police. False reports were coming in from all directions that Rome had fallen and was under a people's government; and in the wake of these reports, the people of the countryside armed themselves. Most of the participants were braccianti and since braccianti were so numerous in Ravenna, the spontaneous people's army succeeded in disposing the existing authority. The prefect had been promised safe passage out of Ravenna but couldn't get out because every street and bridge was guarded by armed braccianti, and he ended up fleeing in a small boat for Venice. The provisional government closed the port and