This interview was conducted as part of a series on Mexican American History in the State of Minnesota.

Jose A. Valdez, Director of the Minnesota Migrant Council, with headquarters in St. Cloud, Minnesota, describes the history of the organization from its inception in 1969, to June 1976, when this interview was conducted.

He outlines the activities, functions, projected goals, allocations and distribution of organizational funds.

He also mentions the subcontracting agencies, and explains the structure of the organization, and expresses his goals for the extension of service to the Mexican American population in the state of Minnesota.

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview, edited slightly for clarity, corrected, and approved by Mr. Valdez. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.
INTERVIEW WITH JOSE VALDEZ  
JUNE 21, 1976

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger, interviewing Mr. Jose Valdez, for the Minnesota Historical Society's Mexican American History Project. Today is June 21, 1976. Do I have your permission to interview you for this project, Mr. Valdez?

Valdez: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Could you start by telling us a little about yourself? How you came to Minnesota and how you became the Director of the Minnesota Migrant Council?

Valdez: First of all I was a migrant farm worker for a number of years. Mostly during the years when there was no program assistance from the Federal Government or any other state. There was a little bit of church assistance for migrant people. I was a migrant, mostly during the year when you really had to go out there and work to survive, if you didn't make it, that was tough. Then in 1965, I ceased migrating to Wyoming and Colorado. I never came to Minnesota. I didn't know anything about Minnesota, except that you had the Vikings here. I also got married in 1965. I was out of the Army the last year that I migrated. Then the whole war on poverty started. Ever since the war on poverty started, I got really involved in Laredo, Texas which is my home town. I always wondered what it would be like coming up north, since all these assistance programs came into being. In 1973, I was in Allis, Texas, working at a community action agency. An announcement came that there was an opening for a director of a program in Minnesota. Just for the heck of it, I sent in a resume, not really thinking that I would be considered. Most of these programs are very political in nature, very intraboard and political. Usually they already have an idea of who the director will be. Just like in national politics; we know that it is Carter, Nixon or Reagan; one of them whether we like it or not, is going to be our next president. The same thing in the anti-poverty programs. So I did not expect to be selected here in Minnesota. I received a letter stating that they liked my qualifications and wanted me to submit a formal application and come here for an interview. I was very hesitant about coming. My wife joked about it and made a bet that I wouldn't come since I wasn't used to air travel. Now I have traveled by air so much, that I should even get a license! Finally I came here for an interview and I was hired right away.

Moosbrugger: Was that by a government official?

Valdez: No, by the Governing Board of Directors. We have a governing board of officials here, they hired right there on the spot. I have been here ever since September second or third of 1973. I am going on three years as
Valdez: Director of this program. That is how I came to Minnesota; it happen within a ten day period.

Moosbrugger: Would you say that your goals and objectives were very much compatible with the goals and objectives of the Board of Directors at the time they hired you?

Valdez: Yes. When I am interviewed for a job, my philosophy has been to tell people what I am going to do for them. Not that I want the job. I had been involved in this type of business before. When I came here I had two interviews, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. I can honestly say that I interviewed them. I wanted to know about their program. After talking to them for an hour I told them that I would be back in the afternoon after they had interviewed the rest of the candidates and I would tell them what I was going to do for them. I got as much information as possible from them. Three hours later, at the St. Paul Hotel, I laid out a plan for them. I told them our goals could be met and that there wasn't any reason why we couldn't be a one-million-dollar-plus funded program, which is the amount you really need to be able to have enough flexibility to do the thing you need to do. We set our goals right then and there and we have achieved those goals. We would go speak to the governors and senators and lay before them the case and get their cooperation. We have done all these things. I can honestly say that in the three years that I have been here, my family and everybody, we have met our program's goals. I can say this about Minnesota, you go out there fighting for a dime and they give you a quarter if you can prove your case. Every time we have done this, we go to the governor and say we want x.y.z. things. Once we get through discussing the issues with him, we get x.y.z. plus d.f and b and h and everything else. We get a lot of challenges from him and we also challenge him. We know the governor on a first name basis. When I say "we", I am saying our Board of Directors.

Moosbrugger: Who are the people who are on the Board of Directors?

Valdez: Let me give you a little introduction to our program, how it's funded and how it operates. We have a twenty-four member Board of Directors. There are five areas throughout the state of Minnesota, which have a heavy concentration of migrants. In East Grand Forks, we have what we call a PAC (Policy Area Community). They have their own by-laws. Every year the migrants that come from the Southern part of the United States, have an election. They select their board; it can't be less than twelve nor more than sixteen members. This board is then known as the East Grand Forks "PAC", the same thing happened in Moorhead. This year we had participation
in Breckenridge. Moorhead is the second one. We also have one in St. James, Blooming Prairie, Madelia and in the Twin Cities. Each one of these five PACs selects four members to a State Board. Fifty-percent of those four members have to be migrants themselves, or ex-migrants within one year, or they can be seasonal workers. This is very important, so that they never lose track of their goals. People who live in town and work in the fields every summer or in the food processing plants and so on. That gives you a total of twenty board members. Then the board appoints four board members, two from the churches and two representatives from community action agencies. That makes twenty-four members. They meet every year. They have annual meetings where they select officers. Our annual meeting is next Saturday, here in St. Cloud. They will be selecting officers again.

We operate the Board of Directors, the Board of Directors hires a staff. I am the Executive Director. We have five main offices year round. Breckenridge is only a temporary office. Between Danube and Renville they built one of the biggest sugar processing plant in the world. There is a lot of big sugar beet areas around here. Litchfield is where we have our main office. This is the only place where we have year round migrants. They work in the Jenny-O-plants, turkey processing plants. In the summer, we coordinate this whole area out of this office (St. Cloud). There is going to be more sugar beets in this area. Ground has already been broken for a new plant in the Thief River Falls area. We see an increase in migrant workers in the state of Minnesota, as opposed to a national trend of decrease in migrant farm workers. In Minnesota, it's going up, not down. Our system of operations is similar to an Army type of system. The system is very simple. We have an executive director, a deputy director, who is in charge of field operations. Then we have an administrative assistant who will assist me, the Executive Director, with new planning programs, with political and public relations work that has to be done. We have contracts with other people. For example, we fund Migrants in Action.

Our operations are funded mostly through federal money, through the Department of Labor. We have some money from the state. The state government Man Power Office. Since its operation in 1971, you can see a trend where we have been moving up, up and upward. Yet very, very slowly, making sure that every step we take is on firm ground.

In 1969, you had your OEL programs. Through OEL, there started a Migrant Incorporated Program. It was headed by Mr. Jim Fish. Most of the people involved in this program were in the Twin Cities area. One of the things
Valdez: against it was Anglo started. There weren't any services for migrant workers. One of the people that started there was a young man named Arnaldo Garcia. I have never met him, but I have heard a lot about him. Arnaldo was a very aggressive man, very inspiring. He was a mover. We have a lot of his records and his activities here, ever since 1969, Board men, travel vouchers everything. I have looked into them extensively. I love history and I always look through whatever records we have here. This program, unfortunately, because of administrative problems, which is the only reason that I can see, was defunded in 1970. Mr. Garcia, being a very---I hate to use this word---good hustler for funds, started getting money from different places, to put something together. An application was put in the early part of 1971 to OEO, to fund again a program, this time called Minnesota Migrant Council. The first was Migrant Incorporated. In came a man named Pedro Moreno. He was working for the State OEO Office. Pete and a lot of people got together and got this program funded. Unfortunately, through the politics, Arnaldo was proposed as the first Director and he was hired as the first Director. There was a lot of intraboard fighting. All this time there is a lot of energy being used in trying to get this organization together. The amazing thing is that they actually did survive one way or another. Unfortunately, the forces that were pushing this program divided themselves. Arnaldo Garcia was either fired or he resigned. Somebody else was hired to take his place. Guadalupe Gonzalez he was there for about two months. And here is where we went through the old South America Dictatorship, where there was a revolution every six months. There were really a lot of people. My analysis of the whole situation is that there were too many people from outside putting their hands into the administration of the program. They wouldn't let the directors themselves, beginning with Arnaldo Garcia and the rest of them, do their job. Everybody was trying to tell them what to do, and of course mistakes were made. Now you can begin to understand why we are far way from everything. That is the reason that we are not in the Twin Cities. There are too many intraparty politics. We don't have time for that and we can not afford that. This little history which I am telling you has proven to us that they will pull the program down. 1971 saw this program go through three directors. We have a very young and dedicated board, because now they are slowly coming back to the Board of Directors. They can see all this past and you ought to see them now! Take Mrs. Castro, she went with one of our workers to Kansas where we were trying to set up a rest home center. We go all over the states
Valdez: not just Minnesota. Mrs. Castro and my administrative assistant went up there, and in a matter of four days, they almost set up a whole rest center, coordinated with state agencies, private agencies, caps and everything else. These things make us feel very proud because you can see board members in action. Whereas when this whole war on poverty started, who was told they had power, and this mumble jumble? They had the right to read the books, but what the hell is the right to read Russian, if you don't read Russian? You can see the books, but that's all you can do. So we went through this period. There was a lot of animosity between staff and board members. Who has what rights, the same old thing as the war on poverty went through before. We were lucky because I think we came out of it in a period of two and one half years.

In early 1972, David Ramirez was the Human Rights Director for the city of Minneapolis. He was the Executive Director. He had the same problems; a lot of Board Members telling him what he should do. Everybody was trying to tell everybody how to run the program and no body was running any programs. This is very, very important because you have to see a little more how this has ceased completely. It was a hell of a problem. A director had to spend a lot of time trying to see how he was going to get somebody off his back, or defeat somebody in a community meeting. Yet the objective was simply to win an argument, never to increase a program in funding. Discussions were never held constructively on the objectives that were being risen. Every new objective was simply political. David did a hell of a job out there. We saw a lot of his statistics here. I met with him, and he comes here. He is a very good friend of mine and our Board of Directors.

In 1972, there was a split, a big split. This organization, which was based in the Twin Cities, divided itself. A suit was filed in court. A lot of people made noise about that suit, that somebody was sued. The suit was nothing more than; who should be on the Board of Directors? They weren't questioning the expenditure of funds, or the property that had been stolen. Nothing like that, it was a simple political thing. But just to show you how big it got, it even went to court. I would have to say that the first two years were spent on clarifying Board rules. a lot of people put a lot of personal efforts in there. Of course a lot of personalities clashed. Out of these two organizations, the Minnesota Migrant Council was born. Then by court order, it moved its office out of the Twin Cities. There were other programs involved. For example, there was a grant this council had from some people in the Midwest. They were the Midwest Council of La Raza. Again it was trouble. Just to show you how ridiculous it was,
people who were employees of the Minnesota Council had to ask permission to travel to the people in the Midwest. We have a memo to that effect. Yet when I came in, this was very important to me, because a lot of people came and tried to do the same thing to me that they had done to other people. I simply took all this information and I told them, "Well you were the ones that were advocating this, you were trying to judge us, when you don't know any better yourself. Why don't you leave us alone?" That was the case with everybody, I told them all.

We had a period where everybody settled down. The director was a guy by the name of Joe Cycur. Joe Cycur had a personality where he could take a lot of heat. Now during this time, the Minnesota Migrant Council had no more than 141,000 dollars, their carry-over money, that they did not spend, went as high as 50,000 and some dollars. That's close to over thirty percent of the budget. That's a lot of money that could have been spent and wasn't. Most of the directors had the biggest problem seeing to it that the Board of Directors didn't fight with each other and destroy the whole thing.

I came here in 1973 when things had been quieting down. There were still a lot of people in the Twin Cities who barely talked to us. Including the Frank Guzman organization. Eustolio Benavides was the director at that time. When I came here in 1973, I think I came at a very appropriate time. Things were beginning to cool off. Not only that, Eustolio Benavides is from my home town. I know his father very well, so there is nothing for me and him to fight about. A lot of other people that I have met in this state got to talking like that, also. I have a very strong character and I feel that I know what I am doing here. I don't see any reason why I should be afraid of anybody. There was a lot of interference when I came here, from people at the state level and at the federal level. Always telling people what to do and what not to do. I came here and I did a complete analysis of the situation; in terms of how much money is available, and what type of program we are running. What our position is in the Midwest, this is very important because we are a part of this Midwest organization. As an example, the prestige programs are like the programs in Michigan. That is the conduit for money that is distributed to the whole Midwest for food. We are going to be the conduit next year. That is how far we have advanced. We are now the number two program, as far as funding is concerned, in the whole Midwest. This is like our honorary society in the world that we have. I feel that we have come a hell of a long way. Our Board chairmen go and discuss funding. They discuss budgets, which Board members rarely do in all these
Valdez: functions. This makes me feel proud, because they know that our people here are learning about their own programs. They can make decisions through Board discussion. It's not just, to put it in laymen's terminology, a "Micky Mouse Board."

Moosbrugger: This organization that you made reference to, in the Midwest organizations, is that La Raza?

Valdez: No. La Raza is not a part of this. La Raza is a program like ours in one particular area. The Midwest Area Farm Workers Organization is a program like ours. It had counterparts in all the six states: Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and of course Minnesota. This is a federal D.O.L. region five. When I came here, we were the last ones where funding was concerned. We were number three, on the bottom of the totem pole of a whole nation of funding programs. Today I think we are nine or ten from the top. It wasn't done just by us.

When I came here, there were a lot of people here that I would term as "creeps." People who were taking advantage of the situation that a program had. For example, there was a community action agency who sent us a bill saying "We have been helping some migrants that you are supposed to be helping, we have done it for you, so you owe us (so much) money." Unfortunately, the Board of Directors that preceded the one that were here when I came, were so afraid of another suit and losing money, and their advisers in St. Paul and Washington didn't know any better themselves. Everybody was afraid of them. They paid close to eight-thousand dollars.

When I came here, I did an analysis of the situation, I looked at the suit. Everyone was terrified, they said they were going to send us to court and sue us, and we would lose the program. The first thing I requested after I was hired was that I wanted to make a presentation to the Board of Directors, so that we could see exactly where we were right on, where we could go, what was the role between the Board and the staff, so that we could respect each other. I was not their "gato" and they were not my enemies. In other words, this was a business association and we should have respect for each other. The only way I saw that we could do this, and I already had some background here, was to go into intensive training; either learn it, or don't ever ask me any damn questions. This is your chance. I always had the attitude that with me, no problems, is we don't get along, we shake hands and this is it. I came here in 1973, we had our big meeting in St. Paul at the Holiday Inn. I brought a lot of statistics to them. For the first time we submitted our request in time to Washington.
Valdez: This is very important, but let me backtrack a little bit. I had been the Director of a big community action agency in Texas. I had had experience and to me going to Minnesota was a thing that I wasn't really looking for, but it was a challenge I couldn't turn down. Let me tell you what I mean by that. I had been the Director of a big community action agency program in Laredo, Texas and politics out there were at first terrible. I was the Director of a big program, 1.5 million dollars. I resigned from that. I can honestly say, in total confusion I really didn't even know what hit me. Politicians in Texas; Hubert Humphrey is a boyscout out there. He can't even speak, compared to those people. The people there are flowery. If you know some Spanish, you know what I mean. Those people can really put a point across in a very nice way. They are just master politicians. Maybe that's where I learned a few of my tricks. I resigned as the Executive Director and I went to Allis, Texas. I worked in other area of community action agencies. I was a planner for a time and an evaluator for a time. I went to training for this. Actually, I was really in a training position all the time. I was a housing specialist so I went to training in all the housing programs that exist, family planning and community organization. All of a sudden I am offered a position as an Executive Director again. So I can actually look back at all the mistakes that I made when I was the Executive Director in Laredo, Texas. Like, if you submit your proposal on time, even if you have to work day and night, but get it in on time. I came here and asked, "What is our dead line?" Our dead line, I think is November 1st. That thing was in there in October and they lost it in Washington, D.C. You can see I was ready for this. In other words, just coming from all this and I get another chance to be Director again. Like somebody who's been President. Like Nixon and he gets another chance. He is not going to cover up for anybody. I got this opportunity. I want to make something clear here. It hasn't been all me pouring out there, I think that I have gotten a heap of a lot of opportunities here and the greatest thing is that people have been receptive. In other words, you tell people something that's reasonable and they understand. We try to do the same thing. I try to do the same thing in Texas, it doesn't work that way, not where I came from anyway. So we submitted our proposals on time. Immediately the people from Washington, D.C. started calling for former OEO program analyst there. "This is what I have to do. Do you still have this guy on your board? Listen, do this and do that." They got a little shock from me. I started to tell people to leave us alone. We knew what we were doing. If they couldn't help us why not just leave us alone? A lot of
Valdez: people got excited about that. Nobody had ever told them that. If you are familiar with OEO programs, they are powerful people. They were very influential to the local Executive Directors of programs. I told our Board of Directors we could tell all these people to go to hell! I immediately clarified our role with the State OEO. We had our problems with Mr. Moreno there. He was very concerned about our program. Like a lot of other people, too. He wanted to continue over-seeing our program. He was very helpful from the beginning. But there came a time when I told him, "This is it. This is where you get off. We don't need your assistance right now, when we need it, we'll ask for it, Out!" Not necessarily Pete, he was very helpful there. He understood and he left. When I went to the Board of Directors, we had this training in Alexandria. We went through the whole OEO law which was the one that governed us then. We went through all that information and I explained to them that an executive director never makes decisions is he is smart or if he knows just what he is doing. He doesn't make decisions on personal whims or anything like that. Every decision a Director makes in here is based on law, that is an OEO-guided line that says he can not do that. On a budget that says you have the money or you don't have the money. On a policy from the board this is what you are supposed to do or not do. Nothing is ever personal in here. Every decision, every order that is given, you are immediately responsible to somebody upstairs. If I tell my assistant, Mary, that the Board is expecting a proposal, as an example, somebody should question Mary and say "What are you doing?" she could say, "I am writing a proposal." Then I better have a complete proposal that she is going to be finishing to present to the Board of Directors for their discussion and final disposition. In other words, I am responsible to somebody else. I have always made that very clear and I believe it myself. There are no kings around here. Sometimes I get a little excited because some of my subordinates, unfortunately don't feel that way. They feel like some of the money here is their's Also, I explain to our people about taxes. We always get this bull that this is the tax payer's money. We did research on this and I explained to them that it is unfortunate, but once you pay your income tax, there is no law in the world that says you have got any rights to that money. That money is now the federal government's or the city's or whoever. It is nothing but a political illusion that people are lead to believe that they have some rights here. I went and got the information from the federal government. We went to the state. Pete was very instrumental in that, incidentally.
Valdez: We want to see the law that says people have the rights to the money once you pay it. There are none. So the objective here was to let our people gain confidence that they were actually responsible for public money. Now how is that responsibility dispensed, or how is it they go about it? Well, the first thing we are going to show you is what laws there are and what laws there are not. I know one thing, you are all adults and I'll be damned if I am going to tell you how to run a meeting, it is too late, I can't show you now. We have some people who are trained in that. Then after we went through all the laws, we went to something else. The main reason distrust between staff and board was, because there is so much money, and yet you never see it. This is one of the main things that I have seen, besides the other thing, distrust. So we started teaching them how this agency operates its funds. How we went through the money, the vouchers, the payroll system everything. I used to bring the board members to the little office we had in Louisville and we went through every station. This is what happened when a bill came in, here is how it's checked, here is how we pay for it, here is how it works at the bank. So we started an education program that was very, very strong. Also, a lot of the rights that people have. I'll be damned when I told somebody from the State OED office, "Get the hell out of here!" They went to our Board of Directors. You know what our Board of Directors told them? "Get the hell out!" We took on some big cookies, let me tell you! That was in 1973.

That first year we got involved with legislation, it was knew to me, we don't have that in Texas. The State Representatives are the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the State Representatives, they are pretty well-up-there.

There were some housing inspection tours, which Pete was very instrumental in carrying out. Later on we found out we were not the sponsor of those. It was never us. It was the state legislators by themselves. We clarified those rules. I used to make all these comparisons, it's like the guy who was dancing with a beautiful girl, then he came back and told the poor little sucker out there, "Don't worry, she wants to dance with you, it's just a matter of time, just give her time." In other words, somebody else was having the fun, but they always led us to believe that we were the big ones. We must come down to earth. We are not that big in Minnesota. We are just a rinky-dink program. People at the state level were using us, like, "Here is a migrant, Boom." I don't know, maybe this is the case. Sometimes you get a Mexican American on the side and the Anglo is the one that does the interviews. This is a Chicano project, you follow of which maybe Mr. Saucedo will be the Director of. We went through the same process
and we said, "No". People would say, If we don't do it this way, we'll have nothing." I said, "Well, right now we have nothing. Besides who needs them?" Let us do our own thing, let us plan our own programs." We educate our Board. We continue educating. In 1973, we went into legislation. That we where we got into it with some of our friends at Migrants in Action. I went to talk to them, and they came to visit with us, and we had some differences of opinion. We were green, both of us green, in legislation. The Department of Human Rights got involved in this. They felt that certain bill that we were introducing, or sponsoring, or asking legislators to introduce, were not in the best interest of migrants. We divided ourselves in there and the bills were pulled out. Anyway, that was the first experience. But it was a good experience. The church got us involved in this, Father Donbargen and Judy Healy. I don't know if you know Judy, she used to work with J.R.L.C., (Joint Religions Legislative Coalition). But they only started us. As soon as they started us, I told our Board of Directors, "Okay, that's enough." They showed us how it's done, let us not follow their lead anymore. Let's go this way," and we did. We got out own Legislative Affairs Committee, our Board of Directors. You must remember that politics were tabu with OID. Well, we didn't give a care. We knew that it was public relations. Everybody was so afraid of this. I explained to them that the laws and everything, once you know that there is no fear. Something very interesting happened in 1974. OEO funded migrant programs were transferred to the Department of Labor. This was very significant to us. In 1974 we still got OEO money, but the programs were transferred. In 1974 we were made to apply for this D.O.L. money. This is very important, because before that you simply sent your proposal and you got the money. You got what was known as an entitlement. It was opened for competition. Anybody can get the money.

Moosbrugger: Under OEO, you had entitlement?

Valdez: Right, we were the ones to get it. Like your community action C.A.S. program. All the funds that come to Ramsey County, come to RAP. What would happen if tomorrow we said this money is up for grabs? Rap would be in a hell of a spot. That's exactly where we were. This got us into a couple of things. Number one, it got us into a direct confrontation with the Governor, and Hubert Humphrey. First of all, they were up for grabs. So the money for migrant services in Minnesota, or for anybody, immediately three people applied. The Minnesota S.E.P. applied, the Governor's Man Power, in other
Valdez: words the Governor applied for the money, and Migrants in Action. We had a meeting and they said the money is only $127,000, such a miserable amount? You guys keep it"

Moosbrugger: Which was the first organization that you mentioned?

Valdez: Minnesota S.E.P. is a D.O.L. or a prime sponsor, mostly in Clay County where the migrants are.

Moosbrugger: D.O.L.?

Valdez: Department of Labor. We transfer from OBO to D.O.L. In the state of North Dakota, where we had also been working, the state got some money, too. Here is what happened in Iowa to the south of us: The Migrant Action Program in Iowa needed migrants. They don't have enough migrants. So they applied to Washington for some of our money to work in the southern part of Minnesota. They wanted the southern part. We had to fight those guys. We had to fight the Governor of North Dakota, because they wanted to kick us out of North Dakota not that they had money. We fought those guys. The Governor of Man Power Office, the Governor himself, wanted to take over the whole damn thing. If the governor had taken over the program, that would have been the end of us. Okay, it was only a 127,000 dollars. It was very interesting. What do we do when we are being attacked? Attack back, what have we got to lose? So immediately we took on the Governor's office. We sent a letter to the Governor saying that he was not meeting some of the laws that were passed in the previous years. Like in 1911, there should have been a Migrants Affairs Office, there never was one. A report was made by the Criminal Justice Department in Chicago saying that there should be a Migrants Affairs Office, in 1975. None was proposed. We got our Board people together, I explained to them the situation. I made up a map and everything. I said we fight or we sink. They said, "Let's go." That is where we met Wendell Anderson. At first, of course, he didn't want to meet us. The same thing with Senator Humphrey. They don't want to meet you, they are such great guys, they don't want to meet you. We said, "You meet us or we'll beat you. Then, of course when they start reasoning with us, we don't understand English. So we met with the Governor's Man Power Office people, Dennis Peterson. He was the Governor's Man Power Director at the time. Now it is Emile Moratski. I almost got into a fist fight with Dennis. I was always getting into trouble with Ministers. He was an ex-minister, now he is a Minister again in California. He is a tremendous guy. We became very good friends. So we put together the statistics for the Governor,
Valdez: saying that Chicanos and Spanish speaking people were the largest minority in the state, of the three minority groups. That was in 1974. We had a lot of help from people like Roger Villa. I went and talked with David Ramirez, I said, "Look, we need assistance, we want to close ranks with as many Chicanos in the Twin Cities that would help us." David has been beautiful. He had a little grudge toward our program before. We went to Migrants in Action and we got all our people together. We were ready to picket the Governor's office. We had a lot of nuns ready to picket. Judy Heally, Priests, State Representatives, like Bill Ogala were ready to go up there with us. A lot of people were ready to go out into this confrontation. But we were surprised when the governor said, "Come on in. What is the trouble?" We said, "Here is the problem."

Dennis Peterson, then, at the meeting we had with him, said, what it it you would like? Well, why don't you do what you are supposed to do? Why don't you quit competing with us? The result of that was that they did not compete with us, they supported us. This has been very significant in the nation because our type of program doesn't get along with the governor and the Status quo.

Saucedo: Could we bring in the Minnesota Migrant Affairs Office? Could you tell me how it got started?

Valdez: In 1971 they were supposed to have had somebody working with migrants. That was one of the concerns that we sent them. We met with Dennis Peterson. Dennis did not want to meet us. Dennis was the Director of the Man Power Office. He was in Washington, D.C. They were simply going to compete with us. We shocked them into meeting with us and we sent the governor a letter stating the reasons for the meeting. We met with Dennis. He was very angry at first, because I sent such a strong letter to the governor, telling him of all this political chicanery, and all this political mumble jumble in the state of Minnesota. Everybody preached the gospel, but no one
Valdez: I practiced it. I came up with some one, two, three or so statistics, facts, and so on. Dennis was very, very upset. He did not want to meet with me. We told our people that we had to go for broke, because we were losing our program. The letter was sent in September. The meeting took place somewhere in November.

By this time we were ready to lose our program. Our program was supposed to meet on December 31st and here it was already November 1974. Our program was going to die and I mean die! The least thing we worried about was jobs. We had a different idea from other people. So we met with Dennis finally, he asked me if he took half of the blame, would I take half of the blame in the whole mess? I didn't want to. It may seem childish, but in the end we became very good friends. The whole thing culminated a year later when he invited us to the Governor's house for supper. My wife and I attended. It was very nice. Only his personal friends were invited to that, so I felt very privileged. I had made five great concerns to Dennis. I made one that said that there had been a report by the Community Relations Service, CRS of the Department of Justice in Chicago. That there was to be somebody working with migrants and they didn't have one. Only a person assigned part-time and they were denying requests that we had made. They promised that they would now create such a position. It was only a position that was to be created that's all. Also, there had been talk of a commission before or a council and nothing had been done. We requested that something should be done about that. He said Okay, they would come up with a council. In the political mumble-jumble we lost. We did not get a council. We got something which to my feeling was ridiculous. It was called a Task Force. Now to me a Task Force is what the name sounds like, just a one shot deal. That is where our problems started. We also wanted a commission or a council at the governor's level, not under the Department of Administration way down there. This is some of the reason why we have not been very supportive of this
Valdez: council of the Task Force. It doesn't have any power at all. We are also very critical of the Humans Rights Commission. We argued a lot about that Human Rights thing, that they hadn't done a damn thing about our people. The result of that was that we got some Chicanos in there, even though we had to pay for them ourselves. We got some people on the Board of Directors. I was also put on the Board of Directors. We also went into the comprehension plans that the governor had for migrants' services. There was nothing. A statistic on migrants, and that was number four in there. Also an organization known as A.M.E.N.S. They hadn't done anything and promised they would. At the meeting, some of the Governor's staff had decided that we were to get the money, our money. Then they said, "No." we said that that were lying to us since they had told us right then and there. The Governor felt very concerned about this, which is something that we have always appreciated. He shot straight. He doesn't bear around the bush. We only asked him for thirty minutes there. We always invited Migrants in Action. We felt that they were the other Migrant group in the State.

Moosbrugger: Who was the Director at that time?

Valdez: Frank Guzman. Frank just came in when I came in. We were both there at the same time at the job. So the governor responded that he wanted me to meet Dennis. Before then Dennis was very adamant that he didn't want to talk to me. But he finally did. That is how the Migrants Affairs Office was created. At first, they asked us to name two people. I was told that I could name the person. I have never believed in that. That is the best way to create tryants or to create fools. I met with our board and told them what the situation was. We decided to invite the Migrants in Action group into this. I think in the end it payed off, because we have gotten along very well together. We always treat them as equal, even though sometimes they have had problems in securing funds on their own. We had always told them this, "You are an equal partner in this whole fight, program, or whatever it may be.
Valdez: Don't ever feel you are under us or above us or whatever. I actually see where in maybe two years more, we are going to be one organization. I don't see why not!

Roberto Avina, was the chairman of the Board of the Minnesota Migrants in Action. We were pushing Roberto for a position in education, which was his background. Roberto, however, had some good friends there at the office and he got the job. I think he got the job of coordinator. You know when you reach an objective, you have to attack it from all sides. Unfortunately, you get some side effects. Well, this thing was one of the side effects. This Migrant Task Force, I said in the beginning, almost destroyed our own program the next year, last year. It was used as a vehicle, not Roberto, not the office but the Task Force itself. So I have no love and neither does our Board of Directors for that Task Force. No love what so ever. If it is done away with tomorrow, I'll only clap.

Moosbrugger: The Task Force would then be what? A group of people, like administrative aides?

Valdez: Well, it is made up of one migrant representative. It is a whole group of agency directors in there, and people from our side that represent other interests. This is a joke. I even wrote an executive order for the Governor to sign, as to what I thought a Task Force should be. I didn't call it a Task Force. I called it a Council. Fifty-one percent of our people are in there. I, of course, told them I don't see a Task Force on Farmers, where you only have one farmer, or bankers where you only have one banker out of twenty-four members. Why are they trying to put this little joke on us? I told them all to go to hell and I told them early. I don't attend their meetings. That is one of the main reasons why I can't support that whole thing over there. Roberto and Bustolio.

At first Roberto was by himself. He came and talked to us and he wanted
Valdez: some help. We immediately called the key to this whole thing, Roger Villa. Roger Villa worked at the Governor's Man Power Office, where the money came from to fund that program. Roger was the one who increased or decreased the amount and took it to Dennis Peterson and Dennis approved. I talked to Roger and said, "Why don't we get Eustolio Benavides to work with Roberto?"

The three people that were running for the position were Roberto Avina, Eustolio Benavides, and Pete Moreno. We said, "Why don't we get Pete Moreno transferred from the OEO office over there, and get Eustolio over there? We got all three of them that we wanted there in the first place. And we did. We got him in there. He can also tell you a lot of history on this.

Saucedo: Pete is not with the Migrant Affairs, is he?

Valdez: No. What happened there for sometime was administrative problems. The politics. Not having clear policies as to what you are supposed to do. People who are not directly involved with migrants calling the shots. For example, the Commissioner of Administration and his assistant Bob Scott.

These people were involved and said, "This and this is what is supposed to be done there." Roberto was never given the liberty to pursue his goals, not that the goals were that clear. I ought to know. We wrote them. This whole thing was not supposed to be. The reason behind it is this: Power has never come through the establishment of commission or councils. That has never been the way any ethnic group in the United States has gotten into power. It is only when you get people into powerful positions that you can actually furnish assistance where it is needed. For our people we need somebody in the Department of Welfare. That is what we need. The Native Americans have the same problem. If you can justify the thing to the governor, so that he can go out and give his budget message and everybody is happy.

We went through this exercise. We told them from the beginning to go to hell.
Valdez: They told me right there and then if I didn't go to the governor's side that the whole thing would go down the drain.

A law was passed in Colorado where every state, agency or department had to justify its existence, I think its every three years or five years, or else it would cease to be funded by the state. When you look at our little blue book here, there are so many agencies and departments, what is it they do and how they interwine.

Moosbrugger: What's the book you are making reference to?

Valdez: It is the Legislative Manual. It's a very good, educational book for everybody that is interested in State Government. It shows you exactly what each agency is supposed to be doing.

Saucedo: What would you like to see in place of the Migrant Affairs Office? For them to be abolished? Or for their organization to come apart?

Valdez: I would like to see Chicanos in positions of authority, where they can dispense some of the resources that are available in the state right now to where they are needed. In other words, I am not any more for these "Blue Ribbon Commissions." I have learned through actual experience, that that's all they are, "Blue Ribbon Commissions." I don't think that our people are right now in a position where they can afford to be members of honorary societies. They need resources out there. I would like to see a Chicano, for example as an Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Welfare, dealing with certain programs in there. How is it that the Blacks get an Assistant Commissioner of Administrative Services in the Minnesota Department of Employment Services, just like that? Well, I don't know how but I would like to see the Chicano there. We have them. Do you know Victor Perez? Well, he's been around a long time. We have people. How is it that the Native-Americans can get people in such positions as the State Department of Education? Like Bill Ontell? We have Chicanos with a lot of
Valdez: Now if we had one Chicano in there, that's all we need. Why do we need a Migrant Affairs Office with no power at all? What we need is a Deputy Commissioner that will see to it that we get a fair shake when the programs are started, that's all.

Migrants traditionally and by federal guidelines, have had the income projected in order to qualify for food stamps. Now that's the other way as to how the regular, or shall we say the local residents are certified for food stamps. A migrant comes in here and he says, "Okay, now you are going to be working for farmer X." Now remember, he hasn't worked a day yet. He's been here for a week or say two weeks. But he is going to be working for a farmer that has two hundred acres of sugar beets, paid at say forty dollars an acre. So they tell this migrant, who has four kids, for workers in the family, and his wife, that's six in the family, they say, "Look, you are going to be making four thousand dollars." He hasn't made a penny yet, but he is going to be making four thousand dollars whenever he works. Therefore, his food stamps right now, if he makes $4,000 in a two month period, that will be $2,000 a month, so his food stamps right now will cost him so much money. But he hasn't made a penny yet. This is what is known as projected income. He doesn't have a penny.

Finally, we have a Chicano working in the Department of Welfare. His name is Roberto Reina, I don't know if you know him. Roberto goes in there and he starts putting his thing together and he comes and he argues with us. He argues with a lot of people. He reads the laws. Bingo! The state of Minnesota is the first state that did away with the projected income. Right now! That's what one little Chicano can do in there. The Migrant Affairs Office, unfortunately, can't do these things, because it's still viewed as an outsider. But it took Roberto, who was skilled enough,
Valdez: cunning enough, shrewd enough, and dedicated enough, to do it. They are going to catch a lot of flack for that, but still he did it. A lot of people don't understand this. Not only do people eat; it's federal funded money, not tax payer's money. It's money spent in the local communities, making the supermarket owners richer. Anybody that studies economics, will see that, there is nothing wrong with this. Incidentally, I gave a speech to some of the John Birch members here at one time. It wasn't a club. There were just some members there. I told them where our money came from. You won't believe this, but a Chicano was actually with them! I said, "I'll tell you where our money comes from. It doesn't come from the tax payer's money. You see the federal government receives only so much money, but they spend so much more, right!? In other words, the difference between what they spend and what they get is called "deficit". Our money comes from the deficit."

Moosbrugger: It's all deficit-spending. It's not your tax-payer's money.

Valdez: I don't know whose it is, but it's from the deficit. Nobody can prove to me otherwise. Anyway, this is what I would like to see, our people out here. I have been offered a lot of positions. I have this philosophy: "It's better to be a big fish in a little pond, than a little fish in an ocean." We got funded that year. The Migrant Affairs Office was started. We also got some money from them to run emergency services. We're coming now to the big year of 1976. These allotments happened in 1975. We got together with the Governor and he said, "How can I help you guys"? He said "You are part of Minnesota." We went to see Senator Humphrey, he also said "You are part of Minnesota." The Governor said, "We want to be with you, because you help to enrich the state." We said, "Okay, here is what you can do." We got together with the Governor's Man Power people. We got all
the statistics together. We did our part. We didn't expect him to do it for us. He signed the letters protesting how Minnesota was getting very little money from the Federal Government. We started a campaign and he was with us all the way. Bingo! Our location was increased from 127,000 to 1,200,000! The Governor and his Man Power Office were right behind us. We went to Washington and told them that we were not alone, we had the whole state of Minnesota right behind us. Senator Humphrey and Senator Mondale represented Bill Frazer. The Republican and Democrats were all for Minnesota. Here is what happened when the state governor decided to support us. We still had to tell them, "This is what we want you to do, this is why you still need Chicanos." It's not enough for them to say, "yes, we will help you." You still need somebody to go out there, because they don't know Chicanos, Blacks, White, Indian and German, they are all the same out there, they are all poor. Unless you come from there (poor) and say this is exactly how we want it done, nothing is going to happen. Pete Moreno is a very good example. He went to work for the Education Department. We supported him all the way. When he went there, we sent letters of support. We went over to see that our Board had passed our Resolutions. Pete is a real hustler and that is good. That Department had always had 300,000 or 350,000 somewhere in there. In one year, Pete had that Department go from 300,000 to over 1,300,000 to 2,000,000 dollars!

Moosbrugger: The Department of Education?

Valdez: For migrants. How come it didn't happen before? Because there wasn't a Chicano in there pushing, ramming, spitting and all that jive. Pete went in there and did it. Do you think we are going to bother Pete? Hell, we applaud Pete. He is doing his own thing over there.

Moosbrugger: Is he still with the department?

Valdez: Yes, he is doing a beautiful job. The Department of Man Power Services,
Valdez: how come nothing ever happens out there? Well, our people are kind of unique. They have certain skills. We are what we call, Environment Poverty. It doesn't mean we don't know what to do, just, hell, we never had a damn opportunity! But we know what to do. We don't have anybody there, the State Department is all Blacks. The State Department of Economic Development, that is the one we are pushing now. We have already submitted recommendations to that department.

All of these things have been happening. I haven't been involved in this thing by myself. Our Board has been meeting. A lot of discussion has been made, because I have this philosophy; nobody pulls the carpet from under me. I am doing this on my own. You know the old type, just the Director on his own. One of the former chairmen of our Board almost got into a fist-fight with the Governor. When somebody tells us "I will do this for you, and we will meet again to see if I have done it, we meet again and it has not been done. Our Board Chairmen went to the Governor and said, "You haven't done what you said you would do."

Moosbrugger: Who was the Board Chairman?

Valdez: Juan Rodriguez. Juan Rodriguez is from North Dakota, from Grand Forks. He was very active in our program. All of our Chairmen have been very active. Our present Board of Chairmen's name is Bob Coughlyn. He is married to a Chicana girl. He knows all of these things by heart. Our Board Chairmen right now, if I were to leave this organization, could actually come over here and with a little assistance he could continue to function. Juan Rodriguez was an example. He is a young guy, about 32 years old, short, but he makes up for it in something else. He learned this whole thing and took it to heart. He was the Chairmen of the Board and he wanted to know as much as possible about the program. Right now he is the Executive Director of the North Dakota Migrant Council. He runs his own program over there and he is doing a hell of a good job. Juan went over
Valdez: there to see the Governor. He almost got into an argument with him, he felt that the Governor hadn't fulfilled his promises. We still don't feel that the promises have been kept, but finally they said, "We can't fulfill the rest of the promises." "Fine, that is all we want to know, we don't want any double-talk." Today we are friends and tomorrow we are enemies again. We feel, if this is the way we have to do it, we will.

In 1975 we got the program that we have now. That's when the funding allocations were announced in Washington. We were of course, supported by the Governor's Man Power Office. We had a lot of support. Initially, they didn't trust us. They felt we didn't have the accountability, the planning capability and so on. We proved to them that we did have all that. We have all of our departments here and we are very proud of them. We have been allotted by the national offices for a training department.

Once, the Governor's people, called the "hill", felt that we actually could administer programs here, they were very supportive of us. I was appointed to the State Man Power Council. I became very active in those organizations. I don't just belong to them, I learned as much as I possibly can about them. That certainly has taken its toll on my time. Anyway, when the allocations were announced for 1976, for Minnesota, it was 1,100,000 and some. In the end we got another 67,000 apprised when we went to Washington to negotiate.

When this money was initially announced, very few people bothered to wink an eye. Since the previous year, we had only gotten $127,000. Well, who's going to look at us? There is a procedure for applying for these funds. For example, by a certain date, I think it was August 1st, you must have submitted certain documents to the Department of Labor, say ten people submit those documents, out of these ten people they say, only three people are eligible for funds. Then those that are eligible by another date, say the 1st of September, must submit a proposal. Then say that three submitted a proposal of the first ten that had applied to be eligible. Out of these
Valdez: three then, one or two is invited to negotiate a final contract, or maybe just one. In most cases only one. It's a process you go through. Now the first step; that July deadline where everybody was supposed to have sent in an eligibility document. There were only two of us that sent it in. There was Migrants In Action and ourselves. Nobody else went. Then they all found out, through the publicity, that there was a million dollars. It wasn't $127,000. So it was a thousand percent increase. Everybody's eyes went out the window. This word got dirty. The only way that they could actually take some of this money away from us was by competing with us, or they could sub-contract with us. Some of the agencies sub-contracted with us, for example, the Employment Services and the Governor's Man Power Office. Now for political reasons, we went out there and immediately made sure that they would get part of the action. Actually what they are doing is the work for us. Then, around the first of September, I went to Texas to visit my in-laws. While I was over there, there was a program known as a Migrant Health Program. Now this Migrant Health Program had ten board members, Father Tim Wenzel and the sisters of San Meshette, who are also members of this commission, this Task Force. So right off the bat, they have got three (3) votes there. The Director plus these other two people. Then some other people in the state there. They had a meeting. The only way they could get some of these monies was to come to us and we would give them money. We would have done that, but they never asked.

Moosbrugger: These are Federal Monies that are available to all of the United States?

Valdez: Right, we were the only ones that were qualified, then, because we were the only ones that submitted the document, and Migrants In Action. But then Migrants In Action did not submit a proposal. We were the only ones. We made a deal with them that we would fund them monies. That was fine, and no problem, then they wouldn't compete with us, by the same token, if they had competed with us, and if they had lost, then we didn't have to give them money.
Valdez: We would run our own program in the Twin Cities. So we made a deal and it worked out pretty good. What happened then was this, the only way that they could get money from us, or they could get the money themselves, was to have the bidding reopened. The only way the bidding could be reopened was when the people who were qualified, were then disqualified. So, therefore, here we go again. They went to the Task Force meeting. First of all they blasted the hell out of us, that we were not coordinated with our Task Force. There isn't any law saying that we have to be. But, all these people started sending letters to Washington. Then letters were sent out to Senator Mondale and Senator Humphrey telling them that we were racist, that we didn't select our Board members the right way. We have all these documents. They went through this whole process. Nurses sent letters into the Governor, saying that we were a bunch of racist pigs. That we simply didn't serve the people. Boy, it got pretty dirty!

Moosbrugger: This was from the Health Organization?

Valdez: They started it, also at the same time the Governor's Migrant Affairs Office was right on top of them. They also got dirty with us, Mr. Bob Scott. It got so dirty. I'll give you one example of what they went through trying to cheat us to see if they could get the money themselves. They had a meeting among themselves and said, "Well, we must prove that we can run the Migrant Program ourselves." This was the Governor's office, through Roberto Aviña's office. Roberto Aviña, whether he wanted to or not, had to be a part of this. More than not, he didn't want to. We appreciate all of that.

Let me show you how they made all their stupid mistakes. There had been some floods last year, I don't know if you remember that. Some migrants had requested emergency assistance in June, now here we are in the latter part of September. These guys say, "Here's what we are going to do." They requested the assistance in the form of grants. I don't know, we wrote the
Valdez: damn proposal ourselves! So they decided that they were going to provide assistance to the people in September, in the latter part of September.

Moosbrugger: Relief from the floods?

Valdez: Right, two things here, now the floods were three months past and everybody was gone. So what happened here was this: They found some people that they provided assistance to. The Governor's Man Power Office gave some 20,000 to the Department of Administration, that in turn was given to Roberto Avena's office. Roberto Aviña went and contracted with a Community Action program. We had staff over there. But they didn't want to contract with us. So they went through all this trouble, just to prove that they could do it without us. But they made a couple of mistakes. That money had to come from Washington, because they didn't have this money. This was four percent money. What they call "Governor's Four Percent" money that was available through the Department of Labor. But not for these activities. They used it and they were going to get reimbursed from Washington. But Washington said the only people we give money to in Minnesota are our own prime sponsor, Minnesota Migrants. When they called me and said, "There is a situation in Minnesota where there are some migrants who need some emergency assistance," of course I smiled and thought it was a joke. The floods were three months past. So they went through this exercise and it cost them twenty some thousand dollars. That convinced them that they should leave the business to us and they did. But, that's just an example of what they went through.

Moosbrugger: To try and rest that million plus dollar budget?

Valdez: To discredit us and all that. Then they had a Task Force meeting where they put me to the task, to explain our whole proposal in detail, and I did. I explained the whole damn thing to them and they applauded. Then they voted against what we wanted. They had no choice but to applaud our program.
Valdez: We explained in detail to them how everything takes place. This Task Force, as far as I am concerned, I said, "No." After us, nobody else was put through the test. We were the only ones who were put to the test. This thing seems to be a personal thing. It is very easily manipulated by certain people. We don't want to participate in this any more. There is no goal here except to destroy our program. Does this program want money? Why doesn't this program that wants money ask for money? We will give it to them.

Kоosbругеr: The program you are speaking of is what?

Valdez: The Migrant's Health Program. If they wanted money, why in the hell didn't they ask us? But they wouldn't. They wanted the program to go to the state so they could get it from the state. They sort of resented our being in control.

Saucedo: Is the Migrant Health Program that you are referring to different than the Migrant Health Services that operates out of Moorhead?

Valdez: Yes, that's the same one. Incidentally we started that program, but you see the mistake was made in there. When we started that program it was given free reign to operate on its own. I told our board. Three years later it comes back and it almost destroyed us. Here's the thing that I think actually helped us the most, we do not seek to destroy any program. We simply want to be left alone. If you don't cooperate with us, why don't you let us do our own thing? We are not going to destroy the Health Program. We have never wanted to destroy it, let them live. All we say is let us do our own thing too. What the hell! No molesting, but, no, they wanted to do this and I solved it. Finally I called the Governor's Man Power Office and I said: "Look, why don't you tell these people to simply send us a letter. If they want money, we'll give them money. We have plenty of money." They made a lot of mistakes, like accusing us of racism. They would say, for example, it was really a joke—everything backfired on them.
Valdez:

This young lady went to our office and said that we were a bunch of damned "Gringos" and that one of the girls in the office was a coconut, were we going to deny that? Really, it's true, a certain lady did that. Not only that, but they called them (our office girls) "bandidas" and a bunch of other things and cursed the hell out of them. Now, I'll ask you what the hell have I got to do with that? That lady doesn't work with us, she's not on our Board. It was usually things like this that made everybody start laughing like hell. You know, things of that nature. Did somebody say this? Damn right! Not only that, they cursed the hell out of the priest once. We got into all these sort of things. It always backfired on them. I think that's what really helped us a lot. In Washington they thought it was just a joke. The attitude of these people when they would argue with others was so gross and insulting that everybody would say "Who the hell is that?" Anyway, we got the money. We said, "Look if you want money, why don't you ask us for it?" They wouldn't send us a proposal. They wouldn't sent us a letter. It was a personal thing that, unfortunately, the young girl had.

Anyway, here is the program that we got. We went to Washington and we pre-negotiated over there. We'll give you a copy of this. We have sub-contacts with the following people: Migrants In Action, $223,000; the Employment Services, $74,000. When you get this you see where it's broken down and how it goes into classroom training and so on. The Governor's Man Power Office gets $200,000. They get this money and it's just for people to go to school. They don't make a penny on this. As a matter of fact, they kick in another $200,000 themselves. The Human Rights Department, Lalo Trevino, gets $13,000, but we have our own Human Rights people. Some guys told me, you have to go out there and buy their services, and they are supposed to give them to you, but the Blacks have everything controlled.
Valdez: I met with Earl Craig and I said to him, "Look, we have some problems here, I know for a fact that they don't have any monies right now", and we went through the whole budget. We have monies and we are willing to fund a position right now with the Human Rights Department. I don't give a damn what anybody says, I want our people to have those services. Because it is one thing to fight for those rights, it is another to give the service right now. So we did. We took some flack for that but that's alright. It's going to end this year. Then we have the Migrant Health Services, we gave them $20,000 dollars. So, we give them money. Then we have our own program.

This is more or less who is in charge of what, here on our staff. Our evaluator is Phil Chavez. Oh, we also have a position with the Migrant Field Office, Joan Southerland. Do you know her? Migrants in Action, Employment Services, Human Rights Department, Governor's Man Power and Migrant Health Services, all these people are funded through us. We have our own offices here. Phil Chavez is the one who is in charge of seeing that all documentation is on time. That all our reports are accurate and sent in on time. This is for administrative purposes with Washington. This is our program. I am also the Chairman of the Benton County DFL, I don't know if I told you that, but I am involved in that too.

This year we went to the state convention. At least we got a Chicano going to New York. Sam Verdeja is representing Chicanos, he is not representing labor or anything else. I am a very firm believer in politics. I believe that it won't be long before Minnesota has some Chicano politicians in the state office. We already have had some run, Raul Salazar ran in 1972 for legislator against Phil Sparing. We now have Vega, running against Robert Stason. It's unfortunate that our people have to take on the Goliaths! But we'll get there. Politically, I think that we have a great
future in this state. I have seen it already. It happened in one year. Everybody got organized. We got about 17 delegates to the state convention in DFL. The republicans, we don't get too involved with them.

Do you foresee an organization like M.A.P.A. here in Minnesota or are you talking about people getting together independently?

Right, independently. In the Twin Cities they will get involved together, but you can't foresee such an organization because we don't have that many people here. Not only that, but history will prove that these organizations are not that effective. Unless they have a whole area that they control themselves, and if they do, why the hell should they need an organization? When you do that they mostly alienate themselves. You have got to have an organization that has goals that are common to a lot of people. I am not concerned whether the Italian Americans out there have a problem saying, "Mama Mia." But if they want to talk about poverty, hell I'll join them! The same thing with the Germans and everybody else. Unless we are willing to help others, how in the hell can we expect others to help us? It's impossible. That is why I don't foresee that organization. But I still say this; before we can help others, we must know ourselves and we must be in a position to help others. That means we must have strength ourselves. We must be able to stand up and if we don't have that, how can we do that? I think that this state is very receptive to minorities. The Governor said it better than anyone else when King Carl was here. He said that, "A tree must have strong roots before it can grow up and it must know it's roots." So this is one of the few states in the nation where that is promoted. But if we wait for somebody else, say the Governor or somebody with a program, to come out here and tell us to be proud of being what we are and do something for ourselves, it is not going to happen. We must do it on our own. But the state is just right. They promote it. There's nothing wrong with this.
Noosbrugger: For how long is the future of the Minnesota Migrant Council? You are funded now by the Department of Labor?

Valdez: Yes, let me tell you some of our goals too. We also formed what we call a Farm Workers Co-op. In the future we see ventures in Economic Development. We have already made proposals to certain agencies in Washington and the state level. We foresee that it won't be long before we have our own, local Development Corporation. Now this is some of the jargon of the Department of Commerce, a small business administration. What we hope to do here is we have submitted proposals in all that. We have done all the work that needs to be done. It's a matter now of public relations, or politics or whatever you want to call it, depending on the year. It's a matter of appropriate funds to get and allow these businesses to get started. I am not speaking of the simple thing of getting a taco stand here, no, no! We mean business. In other words, we want people to make money, not to promote, if you can do it at the same time, fine. I don't see why our people can't get into, for example, the franchising business, like Kentucky Fried Chicken; McDonald's; Taco John's; Pizza Hut and so on, that type of business. Or why not farming? We have a lot of people that can do that type of work. But we need the capital. We also need the special business packages that can put all this stuff together, get the market analysis put together your surveys and so on. These are some of the things we want to go into. We also have great plans to get the co-op businesses. For example; setting up stores. This is nothing alien to us. These are simple things that other people have done before us. The farmer's viewer, for example, started as a co-op. Now they own resorts and business enterprises in Wisconsin. They give them over 300 million dollars in profits every year. We don't see why we can't do the same things ourselves. We are not, certainly, going to remain a social service agency that puts band aids on people. What you see
Valdez: here is nothing more than band aids. It doesn't help people to get above poverty. It helps to maintain them there. As a matter of fact, most of these programs, if they ever get one foot above poverty, they don't qualify anymore. These programs are certainly not for the future.

We have great plans here. We have also submitted proposals for films, and to the filming industry. See, nobody knows about our people. I am glad you guys are here. Everybody knows about some of our people. Everybody here knows about Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers in California. But they don't make even one-tenth of the migrant workers in the nation. Nobody knows anything about us! That's also been one of my beefs here in the state. We also have plans to go into the public relations and into the lobbying business. We believe there's a lot to be done at the legislature. By lobbying, we don't simply mean passing laws. We mean simply to go out there and let people know who you are and what you are trying to do. Generally, if people, including ourselves, know that there is a good cause out there, we are willing to contribute. It's only natural. The problem with us is that nobody knows much about us. We have submitted some proposals through the Campaign for Human Development. We are still strong enough to get out there and twist those arms. That's what it takes. We also see a great future in Minnesota. For example, a bill was passed and it became a law for Migrant Health Services. 150 thousand dollars! It was not a bill saying, "Here is a bill introduced for Migrant Farm Workers for health."
The health bill itself was introduced. Part of that was services for others. We are in there too. That was for Migrant Farm Workers. We are learning everyday. This is what we must do. I have already talked to some state Representatives on trying to get some money on the state level for Economic Development. This is a big one that we have been after for a long time, Economic Development. We feel that there is a lot of our people out
Valdez: there who have talents to make money. They could contribute also to the culture of the whole state. We can make more than tacos! Believe me! There is a hell of a lot of things our people can make.

Moosbrugger: You made a brief reference to movies?

Valdez: Yes, we submitted a proposal for a movie to one of the prior foundations of IBM and it wasn't funded. We have it here and we are going to re-submit it again.

Moosbrugger: Is it a documentary movie?

Valdez: In a way it will be a documentary, yes. It will be a 90 thousand dollar proposal. You guys should be interested in something like that. It was going to be professionally done, promoting also the local movie-making industry. We were going to film in Texas, and in Minnesota. The whole thing was, we have the proposal here in our files. What we wanted was also to introduce a bill. Right now most of the teachers, I think by law all of them, have to take these Human Relations courses every year. We wanted to introduce a bill that they would have to see this film, as part of their Human Relations training every year. This way you guarantee an audience for it, besides the regular people who would see it. We, unfortunately have not been too successful in getting money for that, but, we are still plugging away. Those are some of the areas we are looking into, and of course, a lot of public relations trying to change the image of our people. We are trying to relocate more and more people here in Minnesota, not necessarily to live here, but to get educated here. This is federal money, not state money!

Incidentally, for your information, the state has contributed very little to help our people. All of these proposals are federally funded. We certainly resent that. That's the situation here. We definitely have plans. They are all being discussed by our Board members and so on. Also, like I told you before, we are planning on becoming the conduit for the whole Midwest.
Valdez: Two years ago, we set up a rest-home center in Yankton, South Dakota. This year, we were going to start one in Kansas. Those people out there, we got in a social argument with them. "Look you just do whatever you are doing here."

Moosbrugger: It's hard to deal with the state.

Valdez: Yes, unfortunately. It's all rather personal and rather than create an incident, we said forget it. Our Board members and the members of the National Association of Farm Workers Organizations NAFWQ, Midwest Association of Farm Workers Organization are very active members. We don't just go out there to see what's happening. It's very exciting here, a lot of things to do. Oh, we have another one it's what we call an extension of Antioch College, a University without walls. We have already done the preliminary work and we are doing this as an extension of the Juarez-Lincoln University. They are an extension of Antioch. We are right now, this year, going to be an extension of Juarez-Lincoln. We are getting some of the migrants to come here, but to go all the way back to Texas and get their degrees, their BA etc. They are recognized by the Texas Education Agency for teachers and so on. We hope that in two years we will be the direct extension of Antioch College.

Moosbrugger: Antioch, where is it?

Valdez: Ohio, Yellow Springs, Ohio. University without walls. We are also going to get into the education business in a big way, with Bachelor of Arts Degrees. You can't get B.S.'s from there.

Moosbrugger: This Juarez-Lincoln extension is where?

Valdez: That is in Austin, Texas.

Moosbrugger: Great!

Valdez: That is where we are right now, so we are also in that field.

Moosbrugger: Thank you very much for the interview.

Valdez: My dream is to go back to my home state of Texas. I don't want to be here.
Moosbrugger: Really? I hope you can stay here for the sake of our people and for the sake of Minnesota.

Valdez: There are a lot of good people in this state. I could never finish telling you that. There is a lot of good people, poor people. I have a lot of sympathy for a lot of the poor whites of the state. You see, nobody is fighting for them. I know who is fighting for the Chicanos and the migrants I also know some of the Indians. At least some people are fighting for them. But for the whites, nobody is fighting for them. Ever since I got involved in politics, I have been going out to the boondocks, way out there in Benton County, that new corner out there. I have been meeting some of the poor farmers out there, some of the poor Polish people. Believe me, they have it pretty bad in the St. Cloud Community. In the Twin Cities, nobody is fighting for them. Even when we have won our battle, we haven't won anything. There is more poor people out there. That is why I said, we must be willing to help others before we expect them to help us. That is why I feel that this fight hasn't even started yet. Most of the politicians here in Minnesota, the leaders, they are so liberal that they have forgotten about poverty in their own state. I have gotten involved with a lot of them, Republicans and Democrats. I think that the Republicans stand a chance to make some headway in there, if they ever get into it. But I suppose they are worse than DFLers!

Moosbrugger: Thank you very much.