

TAPE ARC - 64; TC 22:00:00

“Fighting for our Lives”; photographed and edited by Glen Percy; narration written by Glen Percy - Peter Matthiessen - Luis Valdez; narration spoken by Luis Valdez; A Farm Worker Film; 1974

22:01:14 PRIEST: We have come to the Coachella Valley because we believe in justice for farm workers, because we believe the farm workers should be represented by a union they believe in. Today our group of 25 church leaders, congressmen and their representatives, and labor leaders, visited approximately 1000 workers in the fields, and asked them to mark a simple survey form to indicate to us their preference for union representation. We have kept personal custody of the ballots and the results of the ballots are as follows: United Farm Workers Union / AFL - CIO, 795, Teamsters, 80, no union, 78. It is clear to us in the light of these figures that the vast majority of farm workers in the Coachella Valley want to be represented by Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers Union, want to continue under the protections of UFW contracts, and resent the intrusion of the Teamsters Union.

22:02:33 U.S. CONGRESSMAN EDWARD ROYBAL: ...well it was quite evident by the reception that we got that the workers were overwhelmingly in favor of Chavez. In fact, the first thing they said to us was “viva Chavez.” It seems to me that uh, a statement that was made by one of the men we questioned, was said to me that he doesn’t see why there is a controversy, that all 52 uh, members of his crew were for Cesar Chavez, and he assumes that the vast majority of the people working in the Valley feel the same way.

22:03:12 REVEREND SACHEM: I'm Lloyd Sachem, sir, [GROWER DAVID
BALDORO: I don't give a god damn who...I know who you are] and this is
Congressman Roybal.

22:03:15 BALDORO: I know who you are Reverend Sachem, I'd thank you if
you'd get the hell out of my field, believe me.

22:03:30 FEMALE VOICE: You let the Teamsters in...

22:03:33 BALDORO: I have not let anybody in my field, ma'am, in fact I
haven't talked to anybody at all about anything.

22:03:40 REPORTER: Do you have any opinion about the Teamsters at all?

22:03:41 BALDORO: I have no opinion about anything.

22:03:44 REPORTER: About anything?

22:03:45 BALDORO: It's up to the workers.

22:03:47 REPORTER: It's up, will you give them an election?

22:03:49 BALDORO: They didn't want an election before, why do they want
an election now? Cesar's not going to give them an election.

22:03:54 REPORTER: Well, are you willing to let them have an election?

22:03:57 BALDORO: I'm not saying anything.

22:03:58 REPORTER: Well you said it's up to the workers?

22:03:59 BALDORO: Come on, get out.

BILL KIRCHER, at table:

22:04:40 ...under these circumstances, the Farm Workers Union will have the full and undivided support of the AFL - CIO, all over this nation where these contracts are concerned.

BILL KIRCHER talks to camera:

22:04:56 The thing that really distresses me, is to find another union, trying to wipe out all that these people have done for themselves in a five or six or seven year struggle. You know there are many people who don't realize that the effort of farm workers to unionize themselves is not a recent effort; it's been going on for over 85 years in this state. And each effort has been ground into the dirt, unsuccessful. And the sad thing is that during those 85 years, there was a Teamsters Union. And never at any time, in those past 85 years were the Teamsters interested enough to try to help poor field workers.

HARRY WEATHERFORD, Tenneco Vice President and PRIEST:

25:10:53 PRIEST: Don't let them intimidate you, just like Lupe says...

25:11:02 WEATHERFORD (shielding face from camera): Who invited you in sir?

25:11:03 PRIEST: The people who work here, they have a right to invite us in.

25:11:06 WEATHERFORD: Are you sure of that?

25:11:07 PRIEST: I'm sure of that, if you want to...

25:11:08 WEATHERFORD: Even if they're no longer employees?

25:11:10 PRIEST: They have the right to live here, there's no reason why they can't live here; they've got sixty days to stay here, they can't be evicted...

25:11:17 WEATHERFORD: Sixty days?

25:11:18 PRIEST: Sixty days.

25:11:19 WEATHERFORD: Are you sure of that?

25:11:20 PRIEST: It's state law...

25:11:21 WEATHERFORD: Don't fool around with that...

TOM DALZELL, UFW legal worker:

22:12:06 About thirty minutes ago Lt. Yoximer came over from the Sheriff's Department and asked everyone to move over to this side of the street, saying there would be no problems if we did, and about ten minutes ago he came over and decided there was also an injunction on this side of the street. We have to be 60 feet from that property line, and 60 feet from this property line, which puts us somewhere up in the air. For all intents and purposes we have no right to strike.

TEAMSTER STRIKEBREAKERS taunt farm workers, priest, and Cesar on the picket line:

22:19:29 UFW ORGANIZER: Your job is to drive a truck, you don't know anything about farm workers, you've never known anything, you never will know anything about farm workers. And you're strike breaking for \$67. dollars a day, you're strike breaking for \$67. dollars a day, you don't think about that? You're strike breaking.

22:19:46 TED CALDEN, AFL - CIO: Now just turn around to see who you're with. And you're not on the side of the workers. You should be on this

side. [farm worker: “you should be on the side of the people man”]

22:19:55 TEAMSTER: Hey, I’m people too...

22:19:58 WILLIAM GILBERT, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, AFL - CIO: He’s people, \$65. a day, a \$65. dollar a day guy, a \$65. dollar a day guy....Hey, when, when’s the Teamsters gonna call one meeting of the people, the workers in this valley? Call one meeting, public meeting, the Teamsters don’t dare call a meeting of the workers in this valley....you’re only here for one reason, \$65. dollars a day, you’re a \$65. dollar a day fink, nothing but a fink, a growers fink.

22:20:24 JOE LOPEZ, AFL - CIO: Why don’t we settle this once and for all? Why don’t we have an election? And if you guys win that means all these people will become your members.

22:20:23 Because we’re the workers, you let us decide who wants that contract. You don’t want them signing back door contracts for you do you? Don’t you want to be represented? You’re workers. We’re workers. We want to be part of the action. We’re the union. The union, supposed to be the brothers aren’t we? We want to work, but we’re not going to work under something we don’t have anything to do with. Don’t you believe in democracy? Then why won’t you let us have an election? Don’t you believe in elections?

22:20:59 CESAR CHAVEZ: You know, if we don’t have an election, we’re gonna be here for ten years. You’re not gonna be here ten years. Thirty years. Five years. We’re not gonna go. Now, if we have an election today, ten o’clock in the morning, by one minute after ten, we get out of here, you can have all of them.

You can have all these guys who are workers, part of the Teamsters. If we win the election, you guys take off. Is that fair? O.K. that's all we want. Look. Would you agree there's a strike going on now? ["It's obvious."] O.K. then would you agree then in that case, you're breaking the strike? Which side are you on?

JERRY COHEN:

22:24:16 The Supreme Court, as you know, in the state of California, December 29th, said that the Teamsters were interfered with by the growers. Now that's a legal term, that means that the Teamsters were invited into the fields by the growers to deprive the workers of their right to have the union of their own choosing, and to destroy the farm workers union. The grape growers invited the Teamsters in to destroy our union, because, you know, once a whore, always a whore.

22:26:47 Many workers that were trying to walk out on strike were prevented from walking out on strike by Teamsters with lead pipes, baseball bats, guns, knives, clubs, grape stakes, leather whips, and other dangerous instruments.

PICKETERS talk about run ins with Teamsters:

22:27:32 PICKETER: ...they surrounded our truck, you know, and they told us to get off of our car, and we refused to get off of our car, you know, and they pulled us out, and hit him, and...

CESAR CHAVEZ talks on the phone:

22:27:56 ...It's not a difference of opinion Sheriff, they're coming, they've paid them to come and beat the hell out of us. Not a difference of opinion. What that is is the growers and the Teamsters have made up their minds they're going to stop this strike at all costs.

22:28:06 MIKE DRAKE, Communication Workers of America, AFL - CIO: I was taking three people to the doctor, to the clinic, in Coachella, and we were run off the road by one of the head Teamsters named Miranda.

22:28:13 CESAR (voice-over): We've had some of our leaders beaten up today, right in front of police. There was a whole group of goons there, you had two officers, by the time they come to the picket line, our people are already beaten. They're now roving like a bunch of animals, after our people.

22:28:31 BILL ENCINAS, UFW Organizer: And as I rounded Hwy 195, under Hayes, two cars overcame me and pushed me off the road. And seven guys jumped our, all Teamster goons, and flung open my doors, and started swinging.

22:28:45 ROY TREVINO, striker, lying injured in bed: This man came at us, with a knife, he got a big stick, you know, bigger than my neck, and he hit me across the head, three times.

22:28:54 CESAR (on phone): You know what they're going to, they don't care whether they're strikers or not, they're Mexicans, they're stopping them and beating them up in the streets.

22:29:00 TREVINO: Seventeen stitches, in the head.

22:29:23 NEIGHBOR of FRANCISCO CAMPOS: I was asleep, I was asleep, and my sister called me, you know. And as soon as I walked out the door, I saw the fire you know, I came and knocked on the windows.

CESAR CHAVEZ speaks at a rally (Carpesino Band OVER ALL ON MUSIC TRACK):

22:31:45 ...the work before you is very clear, we want you to take out everybody in those fields, wherever possible and make sure that the grapes turn into raisins on the vine. Let's make sure there's a boycott. If the growers sell the grapes, make sure the grapes are sold for less money than it cost them to pick them.

CESAR interviewed by REPORTER:

22:33:26 REPORTER: There have been some reports calling you a loser, and that if you lose the 29 contracts here in the Delano area, that would be the end of the United Farm Workers. Do you agree with that?

22:33:36 CESAR: No that's nonsense. We've got the people. They've got the contracts, we've got the people, see who wins.

22:22:40 REPORTER: How strong an effort are you going to make in the urban areas?

22:33:44 CESAR: In the urban areas? Oh, the Boycott. Very strong. We're having a, no-loss boycott, uh, of table grapes and lettuce, and the effort is very strong, it continues.

22:33:58 REPORTER: Do you think that's where you are going to win your battle?

22:34:01 CESAR: No, we're going to win it here and there both, it's a double whammy. (smiling)

FILIPINO WORKER speaks to PRIEST:

22:34:30 FILIPINO WORKER: We really appreciate what the union has given us. We have medical, we have conditions in the fields, we have toilets, we have ice water, we never had those before. ...Never.

22:34:44 PRIEST: Yeah, and they have none of that here today?

22:34:48 FILIPINO WORKER: Today, today, after our contract has expired, only for a few days, those things are not here any more. Look at this. And it's really, terrible. See, these growers, they can get away with it. They do it. They do it. That is what has been happening in the past.

CESAR CHAVEZ reports about police brutality:

22:40:28 In Kern County, we've had now a series of uh, beatings by the police. They have very consistently used profanity against men and women on the picket lines, in such language and in such a way as to tell them that, directly, that they're going to kill them, and that they are no good son of a bitches, and that they're Mexican greasers, and it's... I think to the everlasting glory of farm workers that they have been able to hold back and to continue, and to espouse the whole idea of non-violence.

JERRY COHEN on telephone and interviewing WITNESS:

22:44:09 Now what happens to the autopsy, and what happens to the body?...
Yes. ... we're trying to find the witness right now...

22:44:27 COHEN: He started running North on the street?

22:44:29 WITNESS: North. And then, uh, the officer took after him. He never said anything you know, to hold or anything, he just keep going after him with the flashlight in his hand. And he caught up to him at the corner of La Posada. And that's where, you know, he hit him, with a flashlight on the back of his head. And he ... so fast he just hit him on the back of his head.

JERRY COHEN to press:

22:44:54 At about 1:15 on August 14, right down the street, about 200 yards here, Nadji Daifula (?) an Arab member of our union, was killed, and then two officers dragged him along the ground and left him. All summer long the police have used excessive force. They've beaten women over the head and then they've lied and said the women had attacked them. They've beaten young children over the head and said the children have attacked them. And now they've killed one of our Arab brothers. And uh, it was inevitable because the police here are racist and if you have someone that they're dealing with who has a different color skin, they beat the hell out of them. That's the kind of justice you see here in Kern County.

CESAR CHAVEZ interviewed:

22:55:19 REPORTER: What will you be boycotting? Mostly the supermarkets?

22:55:22 CESAR: No we'll be boycotting everywhere. The grapes and the lettuce. First of all, we'll be asking the public not to eat lettuce, not to eat grapes, not to buy grapes, boycotting supermarkets, going to any and every group that will have us so we can tell our story. Taking evidence of all the police brutality, of all the grower brutality, of all the deaths, of the beatings. Uh, literally let them know that they are, that there is literally blood on those grapes.

CESAR CHAVEZ speaks at rally:

22:58:13 We are not afraid. If this is what it takes to build a union, a free and democratic union, a good union, for good people, we're willing to do it. As long as there is one ounce of strength in our body, that ounce of strength will be used to fight for this good cause. And in the end, we will win.

