

TAPE ARC - 67; TC 1:00:00

HUELGA! -- (COLOR); produced and written by Mark J. Harris; directed by Skeets McGrew; narration, Paul Herlinger; music by Augustin Lira and El Teatro Campesino; executive producer, Robert McBride

Exchange between GEORGE CARATAN, GRAPE GROWER and TONY ORINDINE, NFWA TREASURER beside field:

1:04:24 CARATAN: ...we're payin' what we can afford, what else do you want?

1:04:27 ORINDINE: ...you really say that's all...

1:04:28 CARATAN: That's right, that's right. In fact, right, from the way the grapes sold last year we're paying more than we can afford.

1:04:34 ORINDINE: Well, in that case the only thing is that you can sell the product later with a little bit higher price than that...

1:04:39 CARATAN: That's the, that's the problem right there. You guarantee me that I'll sell a box of grapes uh, for uh, so I can make a profit and pay you \$2. and hour, we'll make a deal, \$3. an hour, \$5. an hour, I don't care, whatever you want, but you guarantee me enough when I sell a box of grapes that I can pay you that much.

1:04:56 ORINDINE: Well pay me enough money to talk with you and be on your side, just please, give us a chance to organize the people, and to, you know I don't, I don't care where I'm working myself, I living through this for so many years already, I think it's about time to give us, enough pay and our wages...

1:05:20 CARATAN: You come and look at my bank account, you probably have more than I have right now. (laughs)

1:05:25 ORINDINE: Well, I'm glad to see that, just to give me the chance to walk into the bank with you, side by side with a grower, huh? Ok, I can take your picture for my kids, you see I'm walking side by side with this grower and he give me the chance to look to check his bank account.

1:05:47 CARATAN: You'd be surprised, you'd be surprised.

BRUNO DISPOTO, GROWER REP talks with Filipino workers for camera:

1:06:54 DISPOTO: ...We've got a lot on hungry boys here, how are you, you've got some hot pepper? How are you today? What'd you do, eat everything today? Well, I'll go up to camp and get a bite. Boy, I didn't realize you guys ate so much... that's not a problem, don't worry. Here's Tony, does our irrigating. ...How many youngsters you got now, Tony?

1:07:19 TONY: Two, two, I got two boys.

1:07:22 DISPOTO: You know the picketers call him a scab. How long you been working here now, Tony?

1:07:25 TONY: Thirty five, almost twenty...[how many years?] I think almost twenty years.

1:07:33 DISPOTO: Almost twenty years. And how many years you have here now?

1:07:33 WORKER: 1959

1:07:34 DISPOTO: 1939, well, let's see, you worked up in the Northwest...

1:07:40 WORKER: Alaska.

1:07:41 DISPOTO: Yeah, working on tuna, then he goes up on asparagus and then comes back down here. So, all right, no, Mariano has been around a long time, and another faithful worker. He's, like I say, you said 1939, that's a scab see, '39, Ok.

1:08:00 DISPOTO: Would you get about two guys, and let em, uh, show em how, what you are doing to the vines, so they get an idea of what's involved in the type of work you're doing today. Their work is of a personal uh, touch, and, which requires a tremendous amount of what we coin the phrase of loving care. ...Pete, Pete, Pete, I mean Sammy, Sammy... If the worker has any discontent with employment, he can do more damage to the uh, farming operation in five minutes than any increase in wages can encounter over a period of years. Yeah, that's it, get the other vine...

1:08:43 REPORTER: Well, in light of this is it your policy to just ignore the strike then?

1:08:48 DISPOTO: Well it's been our policy all along that we're ignoring the people that are here. We're accepting uh, the work of our worker, that they want no representation.

LUIS VALDEZ:

1:09:00 [VOICE OVER] At best, you know, a lot of these growers uh, treat the Mexicans and the Filipinos with a certain paternalism. "They come back every year to help my out" you know? And uh, they take em right back to the same old shack.

1:09:21 [ON CAMERA] I don't think any of these places really speak of prosperity or security of any sort.

1:09:30 [VOICE OVER] None of those guys would live in the conditions that they expect the farm workers to live in.

1:09:41 [ON CAMERA] This town is way off the freeway so you never see it, and so people are blind to the fact that thousands and thousands of people are living like this. And they're farm workers. I mean I can remember, when I was a kid we used to do this. We'd settle for anything. And then you, you try to find work, you try to stay alive, to try to find something to support your family with. You actually begin to develop your own sense of values, I mean you, some shacks are better than other shacks, but they're all shacks.

1:10:27 [VOICE OVER] You live in all kinds of conditions. We lived in barns, old army tents, sometimes by the side of the road in our car, when we hadn't located a camp yet, sometimes for two or three days. And you know all this time too, you'd pass towns, and they'd have all these neat homes, these neat, decent homes, you know, well-painted and with lawns. And you'd wonder, why can't I have that? What's wrong with me?

1:11:23 [ON CAMERA] Yeah, as a kid I went to a school very much like this. [VOICE OVER] You're in one school and then you're out, and you're in another school. You wander around from, from camp to camp. I don't like camp life. Why should people have to live in camps? Who says they have to live in camps. And why should they have to wander, you know, several hundred miles to earn their living? My family spent approximately ten years, just moving around like this, from one end of the state, to the other, from one camp to another. And uh, you get a very lost feeling, and you wonder what you're up to. You're just fighting for your own survival. And you stay in some of these places, and you find out how terrible they are, and they offer no protection at all, it's just a place to hide the people really.

1:12:36 [ON CAMERA] It isn't fair that people should have to live in these camps, particularly when they work all summer long to keep the richest agricultural state in the country afloat. And then after summer is gone, they are asked to leave these camps and to move on. The whole system kind of encourages migrant life for the farm worker. And uh, and in the winter time he's reduced to welfare. And you get grown men and women that are used to doing all kinds of hard work, reduced to, well begging. You go and you accept whatever they give

you. And it's unfair. It's unfair, when you help to keep the richest state agriculturally speaking you know, in the nation, moving through the summer, and you're reduced to this helpless position and you're forced to accept things from the state...

01:13:33 ...And why should the taxpayer who pays for welfare have to take the pressure that should rightfully belong to the grower. And accepting commodities, products handed out without labels. You never know how important a label is sometimes, to show that you've bought something. These commodities are without labels, they, by looking at them, you know that they, they're charity.

01:14:23 [ON CAMERA] Well, that's not good enough, it's unfair, it's an injustice when you think about it. It's unbearable when you have to live through it. That's why the Union was founded, this is what we want to eliminate. We want to establish some security and, and uh, some dignity for ourselves, some dignity based on dollars and cents, I guess. Yeah, we need money. Money that we've earned already. We want our share.

C. D. ROBERTS, Director of the Wasco Labor Camp, Kern County:

01:14:52 REPORTER: What do the farm workers need in your opinion, in order to better their conditions, to get out of camps like this?

01:15:00 ROBERTS: They need more money.

01:15:04 REPORTER: How do they get more money?...

01:15:15 ROBERTS: ...you're asking me to answer off the cuff, now, I don't care to do this.

01:15:17 REPORTER: Let me ask you this then, what do you say to the idea of a union for farm workers?

01:15:21 ROBERTS: I think it's ridiculous.

01:15:24 REPORTER: Why do you say that?

01:15:25 ROBERTS: Well, I won't go into that one either. You ask me what I think, this is what I think. Uh, I will say this, farm wages in the last twelve months, right in this area has increased from a dollar ten to a dollar sixty an hour.

01:15:38 REPORTER: Isn't that because of the strike?

01:15:40 ROBERTS: No, that has nothing whatever to do with it.

01:15:43 REPORTER: What is that because of?

01:15:45 ROBERTS: Uh, I'm not going to go on with this question with you.

01:15:48 REPORTER: One other question. Do you think that without a union these farm workers can improve their conditions?

01:15:56 ROBERTS: It has been done right here, quite a bit.

01:15:58 REPORTER: Is this camp evidence of that?

01:16:02 ROBERTS: This camp has greatly improved in the last year. Since I have been here.

01:16:14 REPORTER: Would you want to live here?

01:16:06 ROBERTS: I wouldn't live here. ... You know you're being very impudent? "Would I want to live here?" This is what I call an impudent question. No, I won't answer any more of your questions. I've been here a year and a half and it's improved greatly since I came here.

CESAR CHAVEZ at his desk in UFW offices:

01:16:50 CHAVEZ: Her father was born here and went to Mexico to fight in the Mexican Revolution. That's the effort she gets up here. I was telling here that she's very brave, and uh, it's people like this that made the other unions, and that the unfortunate thing is that many people, or some people in unions complain, you know, about dues and meetings, but these people don't know what the founders of the union had to go through to build what they have. And all they know is that they have a good wage and they have beautiful fringe benefits and everything you know. And all that they see, because they weren't involved in the building of that union, just dues you know, and they tend to be critical. [PHONE RINGS]...

01:17:34 ...Hello, how are you? ... Oooh. This coming Wednesday? Mmmm... I'll be in Los Angeles.... We're going to uh, one of our uh, members in the ranches, been working there 23 years, who is a foreman, a lady who was fired... 23 years? ...

24 years. She was fired this morning. "Because she doesn't think the way we do." That's coming from one of the, one of the superintendents in the camps. So, uh... [MRS. DIAZ (OFF SCREEN): He said I wasn't been fair to the company, and I wasn't...] Do you want to talk to her? Ok just a moment. Uh, this is Mrs. Diaz, you can ask her.

01:18:28 MRS. DIAZ: ...I am 38, I've been working at DiGiorgio for 24 years ever since I was 14 when I graduated from grammar school. It was during the War when I worked there and I've been working there almost every year, except for a year or two when I didn't work there. ... And so just because I didn't think that way they, they wanted me to, and they keep putting in, uh, petitions, and saying to people they'd better sign or they'd be laid off, and I said I wouldn't sign, so... Uh, petitions that they didn't want, uh, that people were not interested in the union, and so they uh, they ran the petitions through there and they intimidated them into making them sign and a lot of the women don't know how to read or write, they don't understand, some of them can hardly write their names. And they were told that if they didn't sign that they were going to be fired, and that I am fired and my husband fired, my husband was also fired.... My husband was fired on Friday the 13th, lucky day.

01:19:33 CHAVEZ: Yeah, and there'll probably be other firings too. ... OK, thanks for calling, bye-bye.

01:19:40 CHAVEZ: Well, I think, there's a lot of things that can be said, but I think basically, they were excluded in 1935 from the National Labor Relations Act. Uh, this is of course the piece of legislation, as you know, that in fact made uh, gave the workers the legal right to organize. But during all this time, you know,

we were excluded and uh, the arguments are that we were excluded, and this is very interesting, the arguments are have always been that we were excluded because agriculture is somehow different. The high pace of employment, the perishability of the crop, and so forth. But if we really examine it, you know, we're very sure that we were excluded primarily because the majority of farm workers in America is a minority group. And so we didn't touch their hearts as fast and as soon as, if we had all been English it would have been a different story.

01:20:42 MRS. DIAZ: We should be organized, because if we don't things like this that happened today can happen all the time, and there's no way that anybody can do anything because if you are not organized, you don't have a voice. Like a child, a lone child, it's sort of true, and everybody'll pick on him because they know that he doesn't have anybody to fight for him. And if he's got a lot of little brothers, they won't be likely to pick on him so much because they know there'll be somebody fighting for him, helping him out.

01:21:09 CHAVEZ: ...well it's their fight, and it's not anybody else's fight, and they recognize this and realize it, and they did very early. In fact if it hadn't been for them we wouldn't begun striking, if it hadn't been for the people wanting to strike. And so uh, it's what is commonly known as a bread and butter strike. In other words, we're not for a nickel more to add to the pension fund at this point, you know, we're not fighting for a wage increase, we're fighting for recognition, which is the real guts of it. And so, it doesn't matter now how much money they're offered, they wouldn't go back, because what they want is a union before they go back.

DOLORES HUERTA in megaphone at picket site, LUIS VALDEZ AND CESAR CHAVEZ present:

01:22:41 Come on out, brothers, we are waiting for you. You are earning more money today because the workers here, went out on strike on Sept. 11, and they are still out on strike. Does it make you feel bad that you are taking your brothers job? ... Does that make you feel good to know that?

CESAR CHAVEZ in voice over:

01:25:03 The most difficult thing in the strike is to be on the picket line. The most monotonous thing you can think of is during the winter you have to be up at 5:00, having breakfast, and be out in the field by 6:30, stay out there all day, until maybe uh 5:00. Uh, standing on the same piece of ground, talking in some cases to the same people, battling the same growers. Uh, it's very difficult. I can't really tell what has kept them going. Uh, it's difficult to put in words, but we have seen people that uh, men saying, we're not going to get off this picket line until we get the benefits for everyone. You know, this sacrifice is being made for new generations to come.

UFW RALLY in Delano:

01:27:55 HUERTA: Friends. We wish to welcome you to Delano. You know, and I don't have to tell you this, how thankful we are for the gifts that you have brought us. You also know that the gifts of clothing and food that you have brought us are the things that will keep us alive for the next few months. ... be able to eat and dress and to maintain our strike. We hope that our union will not

disappoint you. We hope that our union will in the future prove that it will be more than just economic gains that we have gained for the farm workers, but that we will be able to spread the feeling of love and community that you have brought here today in other phases of social life, other than economic and social betterment. So, I thank you again.

01:29:32 CHAVEZ: Before I mention any names, to all those of you who came here, contributed money and brought food, we thank you especially. Yes?

01:29:41 MAN: ...friends of Delano, from Monterey Peninsula, California. We're very happy to be here today. We feel that what we have brought, Mr. Chavez, is little as compared with what we will take back, the spirit of your people. Thank you very much.

01:29:56 CHAVEZ: Thank you. ... Uh, you've made this day a very memorable day for us, and we will remember it for many years to come. We know that those of you who came from the outside, from distant places to be with us, you have come here at sacrifices to yourselves and to your families. Believe me we, we appreciate your efforts and we are very happy you are here with us, and we invite you to come with us, and come and visit us again and again here in Delano where you have many, many friends now.

01:31:14 VALDEZ (?) [VOICE OVER -- this part sounded more directly like narration]: I don't know how we got through the winter last year. Momentum, I guess. I think one of the really significant changes occurred last March. Something had to be done, we'd gotten to a stalemate, and so, Cesar came up with the idea of the pilgrimage. ... And it seemed fantastic. I mean how can you march

300 miles. We organized here at the office and there were a couple of hundred people in line, to march to Sacramento....

01:33:01 ...And then we got out of Delano, and we got to Ducor, which was a 17 mile walk, and that started it, I guess, we were received by a separate family of farm workers. And then from there it was the next town, and then the next town, and it kept growing, and little bands of farm workers kept joining us along the way. And there was an immense feeling of solidarity, you know? Like "we're not alone," you know? What do you know, we're not alone. There are a lot of people who know us, out of Delano. Farm workers. They'd pick up the little flags, and wave em and march with us. And, to see that grow, it was fantastic. Walking along the freeway, if you had suggested that to a farm worker a year ago, a year and a half ago, he would have thought you were a little unbalanced. I think anyone would have thought you were a little unbalanced... walk along the 99, you know, with a flag? It's just something really tremendous to keep the people walking along. There was a feeling of solidarity, you know. We have a right to be here.... And so we walked to Sacramento, and of course there were 10,000 people there, the governor wasn't there. But that didn't matter. That didn't matter. We were all there. And there was an added something. There was the knowledge that we were going to win.

01:35:28 ...I think the real full expression of the solidarity of these community feelings was in the community center, the soup kitchen, all of us eating together, hundreds of people coming together, eating together. Can you imagine a cooperative store, a cooperative gas station, a medical clinic. These things are fantastic. I don't know if there's anything like it in the United States. ...I think it

does things to people when they begin to cooperate this way, out here in the middle of the San Joaquin Valley, a fantastic thing is happening.

TEATRO CAMPESINO's Rancher for a Day skit...

TONY MENDEZ, standing on car, talks about DiGiorgio strike breaking:

01:40:22 Ok, now uh, first of all, DiGiorgio is using a lot of women this year to try and break our strike, and they do not have enough employees in this camp in Delano, so they are bringing between 75 and 100, which will be the first in a series of events that DiGiorgio will try to do to break this strike. We don't want to harass these women when they get here. We want to treat them like human beings, we want to let them know that we're non-violent, that we're going to win this strike, and we have to have confidence for this. When we go in there, confident, then they'll see, these people know what they're doing, these people are going to win the strike. And we'll have to convince them then and there.

01:44:17 VALDEZ (?) [VOICE OVER]: The farm workers now are doing things that they've never done. Pretty fantastic transition. And, uh, they can stand and shout at a cop, "you, scab." When would farm workers ever talk to cops like that? You know, they've never done that. "You scab, you didn't stop that bus at the stop sign, you're a scab." ...

1:45:37 CHAVEZ [VOICE OVER]: There's no doubt in our minds that we started something here that has given all of us new hope. There's one thing we can point to, every day we have a minor victory, every time we get a man to sign a

card, or to leave a job, or to get a truck driver to turn around, or stop a railroad car, or uh, those are all minor victories, and then it works up to an election.

01:47:10 PICKETER: ... you won't even raise a finger, and say, oh, boss, well I'm finally going to go on the strike because they're struggling for me, and they're struggling for my kids, and they're struggling for even your grand kids.