

TAPE ARC - 10, TC 2:00:00

ABC NEWS, REEL 202: "CESAR CHAVEZ STORIES"

CESAR CHAVEZ, interviewed by reporter:

2:08:12 REPORTER: Mr. Chavez, your thousand mile march is just about at an end. How has it gone and what do you think you've accomplished?

2:08:19 CHAVEZ: Well I think it's gone very well, we've been able to talk to, by the time we get through with the march, about 100,000 workers. And I think that overall it's gone very well, we've been able to accomplish what we've set out to do, and that was to get the information about the law, to get votes for the union, and I think it's pretty well.

2:08:33 REPORTER: Are you happy with the law?

2:08:36 CHAVEZ: Yes I am, it's a fair and equitable law. I think that the only problem that remains, remaining now is the regulations, and see how the commission's going to act in terms of enforcing that law.

2:08:47 REPORTER: The law apparently will not permit you to uh, to go onto the farms to organize workers. Are you upset about that?

2:08:55 CHAVEZ: Uh, we're going to go anyway, rules or no rules, we're going to go because, if we can't talk to the workers it cannot be a free election, the workers must have the right to know our side of the story, so if the commission rules against us, we're going to go into the fields anyway, and risk arrest, but that'll be a whole hassle.

2:09:11 REPORTER: Some people say that the growers and the Teamsters are working hand in hand, uh, that the uh, that the Teamsters don't really represent the farm workers, and that they represent the viewpoint of the growers. What do you say to that?

2:09:24 CHAVEZ: Oh, that's true, there's no question about that. The only reason the growers, the Teamsters are in the fields today is because of the growers, and I think that the elections, when the ballots are counted, I think that that'll pretty much tell the story. I think that the workers are going to vote for our union in

overwhelming uh, majorities, in those areas where we can talk to them. In the areas where they don't let us go in to see the workers, that's going to be a different story. But I think in those cases, we're going to fight, we're going to go in anyway and talk to them.

2:09:50 REPORTER: Now you, you're reasonably happy with the law, but here's one provision that you say makes your work almost impossible the ban on your going into the fields. Can the law succeed if you violate it?

2:10:03 CHAVEZ: Well it's not the law, it's a regulation. See, the law says that the worker should have ample right to be able to be approached by all unions, and now the regulation, the stipulation that says we can't go into the fields, is not the legislation, it's a regulation enacted by the commission, and we're unhappy about that.

2:10:24 REPORTER: Do you think you can get it changed?

2:10:27 CHAVEZ: Well, they're going to have to get it changed, because they're supposed to have elections, how can you have elections if people don't know what the other side's all about. It would be like trying to elect a president of the United States and having one candidate go before the voters, and the other candidate not be able to talk to them. It's the same thing.

2:10:42 REPORTER: About a year ago Mr. Chavez, a lot of people were saying that the Farm Workers were dead, in effect, that your organization was defunct, uh, were they right then, and how have things changed if they have?

2:10:54 CHAVEZ: No, they were not right, they didn't understand the movement, they didn't understand the strength of the union, they didn't understand the following that we have with the people. They never were right, they were just people who were making predictions without uh, having the facts. Things really haven't changed. What's changed is the law which gives the workers the right to determine which union they want, and that's what's changed. But in terms of the people changing allegiances and changing from one union to the other, that hasn't changed, they've always been with us.

2:11:20 REPORTER: What credit do you feel that you and your colleagues can take for the existence of the law?

2:11:26 CHAVEZ: A lot of credit. Because the law came because of the pressure of the union. It came because of the pressure on the supermarkets. The supermarkets didn't want to have those picket lines in front of them anymore. And that brought a lot of pressure on the industry, on the growers. It came because of the strikes and the tremendous pressure we've had on the industry now for about, almost 10 years.

2:11:45 REPORTER: What's your prediction, as far as the elections are concerned, how are you going to do?

2:11:49 CHAVEZ: I think we're going to win most of the elections. Uh, I think that in those places where we can get to the workers and talk to them, I think we'll win. The places where we cannot talk to the workers, uh, it's a different story, but I think that there uh, we're going to have a commission, uh, we're going to prove to the commission that uh, our right to get to the workers was interfered with and that we're going to make the point, the strong point that how can it be a fair election. So I think that when the ballots are counted and when everything is uh, taken into consideration, I think that our union is going to come up with 90 - 95% of all the elections.

2:12:31 REPORTER: Looking back at your efforts after more than a decade, how do you feel about it all, do you think it was worth it, uh, has it, how has it been for you, and what do you think is the outlook for the farm worker generally?

2:12:43 CHAVEZ: Oh, it's been, every moment it's been worth it. It's been difficult at times, because we had to surmount and survive tremendous attacks on the union. And probably more than any other union we've been subjected to some very awful harassment by the growers and the power structures in these communities, and by the Teamsters. But on the other hand we've had an awful lot of support from unions and church people. But basically, the workers' support was always with us, it never left us. And we started with that as a base, and we, we, we've come to realize that that's what really made the difference, the fact that the workers wanted their own union. I think...

2:13:25 REPORTER: ...but, uh, tell me if you will what you think is the relationship between the Teamsters Union and the growers?

2:13:29 CHAVEZ: I think that the relationship is one of uh, the growers invited them in, it's proven by, in some of the court cases we've had against them, to create in the public mind, and in the mind of uh, the legislators, and in the mind

of the courts, the jurisdictional dispute, which was a hoax. And had the growers not invited the Teamsters, the Teamsters never would have been able to come to the fields, because the workers generally don't want them.

2:13:53 REPORTER: What can your union do for the workers that the Teamsters cannot do?

2:14:01 CHAVEZ: I think basically, the union, the most important thing is the workers, the workers want their union, this is the most important thing. Whether we can do more or less for the workers is not as important as that the workers want their own union. They want to be able to create their own destiny, they want to be able to be the masters of their own fate, it's that simple. But I think that basically, our union is a pretty social-minded union, its a very aggressive union, it's a new kind of a union, it's very strong on the whole idea of service to the workers, it has strong, uh, uh, philosophy that workers must participate and run their own union, and so that these things are the important, really when all is said and done, these are the important things, and the workers will be able to find in this union what they'll never be able to find in the Teamsters. It's their union, they run it

TEAMSTER LEADER to reporter:

2:16:40 Certainly the charges are false. We have no way of preventing them from continuing to make these ridiculous charges to impress people back east, but we think the outcome of these elections will prove what support we have, who the workers are supporting.

FRANK FITZSIMMONS, Teamster president, at press conference, after signing agreement with Cesar Chavez and UFW:

2:19:31 FITZSIMMONS: What it will eventually do, what all trade unionists strive to achieve, address the welfare as far as the workers are concerned.

2:21:39 FITZSIMMONS: As far as the farm workers are concerned, as Cesar said, I won't necessarily say, in the heat of battle, representing our organization, like he representing his, made comments at times which we think is for the benefit of the workers that we represent. I don't think any of you here can say, and I heard

a few questions back and forth about the attitude of the growers, and what we've gained, and whether Cesar's now is going to get support, he's not the under-dog, that's not the case as far as his organization is concerned...

2:22:15 ...for the benefit of the workers, who is now covered by the Teamsters as well as the Farm Workers, and will be done in the future.... What specifically? Well, specifically we get this mode of cooperation, as far as the Farm Workers are concerned. We get to, into a position, where we're not used, so to speak, as far as this under-dog statement, that we are the people that are suppressing the farm worker as such. This is what we get. And as far as we are concerned, what we get, the true spirit and the exercise of trade unionism for the benefit of the people who are members of our union.

CESAR CHAVEZ interviewed by reporter, GERALDO RIVERA!!:

2:25:26 REPORTER: How do you feel right now?

2:25:30 CHAVEZ: Uh, I feel, very good. I think that uh, there's a lot of expectation. You know, there's uh, it's a new day, it's a beginning, and it's an awful weight to be carrying around, you know on you back, around your neck, literally, and we just have to worry about the growers now, which makes it very very different.

2:25:53 REPORTER: Can the United States look forward to the United Farm Workers expanding into a true national program where you're in the fields, with agricultural workers in every state, wherever agriculture is a dominant industry or a substantial industry?

2:26:07 CESAR: I think that with the uh, Teamster agreement, we're going to be able to do something in California very quickly. Once it's done, we'll be able, we'll have the resources, and, and, we'll be able to show, you know, something concretely, to other workers in other states. I would think that in the next two years or so, people should start expecting to see us in other places, yes.

2:26:32 REPORTER: What about the violence, is that over now? All the bitter fighting behind you?

2:26:38 CESAR: I think that in California at least it's over, it's uh, it's not happening anymore, I hope it's not happening anymore. I think that that's behind, and I sure hope that it is.

[CESAR, GERALDO, AND DOG, IN LONG SHOT]

2:27:01 GERALDO: It's always been to me, I remember when we first spoke, Cesar, was in, I guess it was my first talk show, '73, '74, I forget which year it was, and you talked about how your strength was so diverted, you know, fighting this other union instead of organizing the people who needed to be organized and who needed a union.

2:27:22 CESAR: You know, it was one of the most difficult things to overcome was this feeling that here all along you were fighting another union but not getting anywhere, even though you may be holding your own or winning, what do you win at the end, you know? And we couldn't put our resources in the direction of really building a union for workers, so it was a difficult experience. The Teamsters are a very, very formidable union, you know, they're very skilled, but uh...