

TAPE ARC-59, TC 16:00:00

CBS

16:04:10 CESAR CHAVEZ: I think that all of us are looking for a place under the sun. By that I mean, for a union, that we can belong as farmworkers was gonna be built by farmworkers and is going to be for farmworkers.

16:04:50 CESAR CHAVEZ: From here, it's already moved to Texas where we have five small contracts and it's going to go from California to all the states going east, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and it's going to not stop until it goes to the furthest corner of this country, New York, Maine, way up there. Because over there too there are workers who need a union because they're farmworkers and because they're suffering the same things that you and I are suffering in Delano.

16:06:21 CESAR CHAVEZ: We have a competition, a real tough competition pitted against us plus an outside union coming to take advantage of the situation at this moment when all of us, when all of us have been working for so hard, eleven months trying to build a union they're coming in at this time to destroy what we're trying to do.

16:07:20 LARRY ITLIONG: We are not sophisticated like what the teamsters would be even to hire us to organizers. But uh, although that may be uh, we feel that we farmworkers uh, should have an organization of our own.

16:07:53 LARRY ITLIONG: They said, we gonna strike. So we told 'em, it's too late to go on strike but to uh, go on strike you uh, suffer a lot of hardship uh, maybe you get hungry, maybe you gonna lose your car, maybe you gonna lose

your house. Those other things that we possess. So they said they don't care. They feel that they're not being treated fairly by their employers so they took a strike vote. Alright they took a strike vote and we asked them the question uh, picketing. So I says, remember when you're gonna strike we need pickets. So out of the approximate uh, 150 people that were in that meeting when we asked for them to raise up their hands for those that would uh, volunteer to picket only one raised his hand to picket. So we asked them why. I said uh, why is it that you don't wanna picket? Well they said but we don't wanna picket our boss. We been working for him for ten, fifteen, ten years. We don't want him to get mad at us. So I said well forget about the strike, go back and work. Couple a days later they come back again, they wanted to have another meeting and uh, well we meet again. The question of picketing was the primary problem we had. So they said that they will picket. Alright uh, two days later, that's when we went on strike.

16:10:14 AL MOSAKIAN: They want cold water we give 'em cold water. They have their own breaks. They always take off about oh ten o'clock and they have their donuts and soft drinks and it's uh, it's up to them. We don't uh, force them to do anything. It's just all we're interested is in getting the fruit out and getting it out right and the only thing we watch 'em is well we go up and down the line and make sure the right fruit gets in the right box. And the rest is all up to them.

16:10:39 CHARLES KURALT: So you just don't think a union is necessary?

16:10:41 AL MASAKIAN: I don't. Uh, if the union's gonna come here and tell you what to do and they're gonna strike and put you out of business for three weeks uh they're just putting you out of business for one year not three weeks.

16:10:52 CHARLES KURALT: Because of the problem of the picking?

16:10:54 AL MASAKIAN: Well you can't ever catch up. You're gonna lose what you're picking. What we're picking today we couldn't come back here three weeks from now pick this crop it'd be lost.

16:11:23 CHARLES KURALT: The um, movement that was organized by Cesar Chavez and the one that's been operating out of this hole seem uh, awfully amateurish by uh, professional union standards. Uh, how can they really hope to accomplish anything?

16:11:36 BILL KIRCHER: Well I don't suppose there were ever any unions that were started and built by professionals. I am sure that there were no more amatuerish amatuers in the whole history of labor than those autoworkers in Flint and the steelworkers in Gary and Youngstown and back in the mid thirties uh, decided that the time had come to have a union. They certainly didn't know what to do. Uh, the sitdown strikes was simply uh, something that they thought of as a means of getting from where they were to where they had made up their minds they were going to go. So they probably uh, the amatuer aspect of the organizer in the beginning days is a plus rather than a minus, you know. Uh, I have a good friend who says that uh, one of the benefits of the amatuer organizer is that he doesn't know all the reasons why it can't be done.