

BILL GRAMI

TAPE 80, CR 113, SR 54, TC 17:00

17:00:03 Give me the analysis of why the Teamsters were thinking to move into the fields in terms of organizing farm workers, and how that was sort of moving towards an inevitable confrontation.

17:00:25 Yes, uh, the Teamsters uh, represented uh, in the uh, from the 40's on through to the present day, all of the frozen food, all of the canneries, uh, the majority of the packing sheds, uh, in food processing, as well as the drivers, from field to shed, from field to canneries and frozen food plant. So they represented uh, in excess of 100,000 people in California for example, that were involved in the food processing industry. All the way from canneries, frozen food plants, dehydrators, uh, fresh fruit and food packing sheds. As well as the vacuum coolers for lettuce and the like. So consequently, uh, when two events occurred almost simultaneously, some of the processes began moving into the field. Some of the processes, for example, I'll give you an example, of tomatoes. Tomatoes formally came into the plants, uh, and then were processed, either whether it was a packing shed or whether it was a cannery, they were first graded by a group of women in those plants and then they went on to a variety of processing, or fresh vegetable that they made. Many other products were handled in this similar fashion. Uh, at some point during the 60's primarily, uh, the tomato machine, for example, came into play, whereas the uh, women that formerly did the uh, the grading, were moved into the field on these tomato machines,

and the tomato machine did the picking, it pulled the vine and tomato, into the machine, separated the vine from the tomato, and then the women did the grading uh, on this piece of machinery that moved through the field. That work was lost then to the packing shed and the cannery, that had formerly been done there. Uh, that happened in a variety of cases, in a variety of products, but that is the clearest example I can give of that happening. Also, uh, because many of the, uh, most of the uh, uh, product that came into plants, uh, had to be, uh, most of it, I'd say about 60% was usable, the other 60% was going to be discarded, and carried back into the fields where it came from. Many of the processes that would do that left the plants and left the packing sheds and were done in the field, so that much of this processing was done in the field itself. So, uh...

17:03:23 You mentioned there were two factors, there was something else going on...

17:03:27 Yeah, uh, at the same time that this, this movement toward the field was occurring, uh, where we had members, then uh, Chavez uh, started organizing in the field. The Teamsters had done some organizing in the field, uh, primarily in the Antle case, where they had moved from the trucking operation, and had extensively organized that throughout California and into Arizona. Uh, and extended that to the field operations and the uh, farm workers of Bud Antle. Uh, but primarily that was just about what had been done, there had been very little...

17:04:12 And the other thing ... the agricultural industry has always had a much higher level of resistance to unionization...

17:04:23 Oh, yes, yes. Well, one good example of it is an industry that's never been organized in agriculture by anyone, and that is the citrus industry. Why? the citrus industry had a history of collecting a dollar a crate as a anti-organizing tool. They had a multi-million dollar fund to prevent organization. Uh, the other reasons for it primarily, is just the nature of the agricultural process. It's a very fast process, once it gets underway, and uh, consequently any interruption of it is highly sensitive, and so there's that natural resistance of uh, of uh, the type of person the farm worker's to begin with, who's very independent uh, person, and the fact that there can't be too much disruption in an agricultural process without a uh, possible heavy financial penalty, uh, to whoever may own that product.

17:05:29 When you talk about the kind of person that the farmer is, I'm thinking specifically of the Yugoslavs and the Italians in the Delano area, the grape growers, who really had a special relationship with their land, they're working with, no one was gonna...

17:05:44 Oh, yes, and uh, Watsonville, for example, the Slovenians in the apple industry, uh they, uh, were probably the most difficult to organize of any of the groups, and the Teamsters ran into that as soon as they walked into places like Watsonville, where the Slovenian culture really had control of the apple industry, and went beyond the apple industry into all agricultural products.

17:06:13 Now when, when the, when you heard from some path that someone was out there trying to organize farm workers, you were sent down

to check this guy out. What, who sent you down and what were you trying to find out?

17:06:23 Yes, the Western Conference, uh, when Chavez began to uh, form a union, and uh, get involved in some organizing, in the valleys primarily, that we were aware of, I was uh, asked by the Western Conference, I was Director of Organizing for the Western Conference, to go down and meet with him and find out what this fellow's all about. Uh, so I did, I uh, went to meet Chavez, uh, and sat down with him and uh, had a discussion to learn really what his intentions were. Uh, and find out how serious uh, an effort this was going to be and in what directions.

17:07:06 What were those initial impressions?

17:07:09 Yeah, the way I reported back probably would give you best idea of my impressions. First of all I learned that he was a product of uh, Alinsky's uh, school of social revolution. And, which is not to say anything bad about him, it just happened to be where he received training. And uh, that his philosophy, uh, steeped in that tradition, was, uh, one of uh, making demands of the establishment but never coming to terms with the establishment. And that in attempting to put together a community action organization, that he found that he didn't have the clout uh, to really be listened to, or uh, deliver on what he was trying to accomplish, so that he decided, and someone had uh, suggested to him that he go into labor as an act of expressing uh, the type of concerns he had for social change. But the philosophy he carried with him was one of the Alinsky philosophy which uh, is probably very active, and may be effective in the political situation, but

has some special problems uh, connected in an industrial situation which he was moving into.

17:08:32 So, apart from telling the people where he was coming from did you report that, well this guy's a serious organizer, or he's a community activist, or what...

17:08:40 I reported back that I thought he was serious, and that I thought that uh, he would find the type of power that he was seeking, more as a labor union, uh, than in his Community Service Organization beginnings. And that I thought that uh, that would uh, cause him to adhere to that.

17:09:05 Now after that first meeting, which probably happened somewhere around '65, um, the Teamsters made the decision to get back into the fields, uh, in a big way ... Di Giorgio ... Perelli - Minetti ... tell me how that decision was made?

17:09:22 Yeah, uh, the decision was made uh, really to uh, test, I guess, Chavez's resolve and uh, um, and uh, probably to learn more about his true intentions on down the line. Um, we had a limited interest in grapes, uh, since we did have some wineries, uh, but we didn't have the same compelling interest had he moved from grapes to some other type of products. But we thought we better get in there and test and find out what this was all about. And so I was sent uh, as head of the organizing drive to contest him in the Di Giorgio situation. Perelli - Minetti was an outgrowth of that, it just happened to be there. And uh, uh, so consequently, we became involved in a contest with him.

17:10:20 But I think the was the contest in Di Giorgio went was you wanted the sheds and he wanted the fields ... then there was a period when the Teamsters didn't have too much interest in agriculture...

17:10:40 Yeah, uh, probably, uh we were working on agriculture, because I was using a lot of my time uh, negotiating for the 5,000 lettuce truck drivers uh, they should be called produce drivers, we still call them lettuce truck drivers, produce drivers from field to sheds, field to plant. And uh, so a lot of times I was going into those negotiations. [PIC ROLL OFF] At the same time, remember, this movement is taking place from shed to field, so we're asking in those...

CR 114, SR 54

17:11:16 O.K. we're moving up to 1970, now, in 1970, things are changing, the Chavez group has run this grape boycott, they're getting close to signing a contract, and at the same time the Teamsters decided to make a major move into Salinas.

17:11:35 Yes. Yes. Well, what was happening is, I mentioned this movement of product into the field. At this time we have many local unions, for example, Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, um, Watsonville and Salinas, that are primarily those representing these lettuce truck drivers, which are produce drivers. And also representing the sheds, the uh, vacuum cooling stations that are scattered throughout. They're extending, or attempting to extend through bargaining and organizing, um, their areas, their contract

coverage to those field operations, viners(??) stations for example, where peas are separated from the vines, uh, as well as the crews that, uh, are responsible for loading uh, these trucks that go into the field, but that are part of the field operation. So they're interested in extending that. Also, they're trying, where there are tomato machines, and things of that sort, to include them in these driver agreements, as a supplement to the driver agreements. All of this is happening. So, uh, in Salinas we had all of the agreements, when I say Salinas that just happened to be where we were bargaining, and where the majority of 'em were in 1970. But we were bargaining for the entire area down into Arizona, Brawley, and throughout all of California and then down into Arizona, for these lettuce truck drivers. Uh, and uh, during that time, we had asked for a lot of these extensions that I'm discussing, to become a part of this driver agreement, a supplement to these agreements. And uh, after a strike which occurred, during that time, in the 70's we struck the, uh, lettuce operations, and uh, after some time, I think it went on, I forget now whether 3, 4 weeks, uh 6 weeks, whatever it did, uh, we were successful not only in, in settling the basic agreement, but also in extending the agreement to those other operations in the field, and uh, there was an opportunity at the time to include the farm workers on a separate contract. And uh, we made the demand and we continued then, we thought well, let's organize it now rather than later. And, uh, so uh, I from the Conference, and all the local unions that were involved that I was spokesman for at that point, decided to include all of the agricultural operations in the multiple areas, so we're talking about Salinas, we're talking uh, down into Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Brawley, uh, let's include those farm workers under this agreement. And uh, we did. And so we did two things at the same time. We started organizing in the field to get

representation from the farm workers, and also bargaining for them simultaneously. We were doing two things at one time. Which is not uncommon in labor.

17:14:52 When you announced the signing of the lettuce contract ... growers had invited you in? sweetheart contracts?

17:15:13 Well, we had the cards to prove otherwise. So we did have cards at the time we signed the agreement. Um, anyone who has ever worked in farm labor knows that you can have um, cards today representing the majority, and tomorrow the crew has moved. Uh, it's down the road 100 miles, that's why the labor relations code that covers in California, farm labor, is designed as it is. It realizes very quick operation. But we did have cards. But you can keep signing all day long and, uh, do you represent a majority? On that day you may. Tomorrow you may not. Um, for example, I had uh,

17:16:05 Well let me ask you this... if you had the cards, wouldn't it have made sense to settle it the way Di Giorgio was settled with an election? Was that an option at that point?

17:16:17 Uh, there was no law at that time covering how you may precede. We did it by demand. That's uh, from the beginning of labor. Uh, as anyone can tell you, uh, you don't file for an election, you represent the people and you make a demand on the employer. The employer may subsequently ask for an election if he chooses. But I've signed many employers in many industries, never going to an election. But simply

saying, I've got the cards, I represent the people, I'm making a demand for recognition. That triggers the whole process, just making that demand. If the employer won't agree to your demand, then there are other ways of handling it. Card checks. Elections. A variety of other things that you can do.

17:17:05 So tell me a little bit about what unfolded in Salinas after contracts were signed?

17:17:12 Well, Chavez contested it, uh, at that point. Number one, I didn't even know he was there when we first started. I knew he was there shortly after we began negotiations, but we didn't even know he had representation in the field, we thought he was involved with grapes. And uh, we found out. And we had suspected it eventually moved from grapes into something else, but, um, we found out he was there, or had people there. And so it ca- uh, a dispute insued between uh, um, the Farm Workers and ourselves, the Teamsters.

17:17:51 Now, violence reported ... members of the Teamsters local in Modesto would come in and engage in violent activity. Was that an aberration?

17:18:14 That was an aberration, because that local that came over and allegedly got involved in some of these things, I later as representative of the International took 'em into trusteeship, and all of those people were terminated, that were involved, and the local went under a new leadership, had a new election, went under new leadership. Uh, but that was an

aberration. They, uh, thought that uh, this fellow should be stopped, and uh, they got carried away with themselves. But that was one local's uh, one leader, I should say, rather than one local, the members knew very little, if anything about it, um, position. ... Fact. I testified against that leader in a federal court, and he was sent to jail.

17:19:10 So, in the 70's the lettuce industry becomes organized ... Teamsters moved into the grapes...

17:19:34 Well, uh, in 1973, we felt that you couldn't be a little bit in farm labor. You're either in it, or you take the consequences of what may happen. And so, uh, the decision was made to go into it full tilt, and that decision was made uh, not only on the Western Conference level, but the International level, that we should go into it. Seriously. Uh, that um, farm labor should be organized, and uh, that we were in the best position to organize it from the standpoint of our economic strength and our know-how vis a vis uh, collective bargaining agreements and the administration of those agreements.

17:20:27 And in fact when you moved into the grapes in '73, the same charges were made by Chavez ... confrontation...

17:20:38 Well, we had a series of contests with him. I don't know that anything particularly happened. We signed uh, lot of growers, uh, he signed some, we took some away from him, that he had signed, whose contracts had expired, and uh, we continued on with our negotiations in the rest of the agricultural industry. Uh, because most of these areas aren't just grapes.

Uh, there's grapes, there's fruit trees, in the same areas, uh, there's produce in the same areas. So consequently we continued. We were intertwined in all of the areas. So consequently other than citrus, as I mentioned to you, uh, we were involved in every type of process.

17:21:33 Well the public perception if you read the papers in '72 was there was a war going on out there in the fields.

17:21:38 Yeah, and I guess you could characterize it as that, and uh, we had a, you know, sharp difference of opinion with him as to what this was all about. And um, so, uh, as to what he was doing, and uh, how he was doing it, and we felt we could do a much better job of it, and also protect our other interests, which was this hundred thousand people that we represented in the food processing industry. So consequently we did.

17:22:12 Do you think the growers were happier dealing with you instead of him?

17:22:19 I think they were happier and probably as a ... [PIC ROLL OFF]

17:22:21 ...full sentence...

17:22:32 I see, I see. O.K.

TAPE 81, CR 115, SR 55, TC 17:30:00

17:30:07 The last time we talked you thought that without the pressure of Cesar and the Farm Workers, the Teamsters wouldn't have met such a positive response from the growers.

17:30:24 Yes, I think that without the pressure that Chavez was uh, applying uh, that the Teamsters uh, would have found it much more difficult, uh, to move in many of the industries, not in all of them. Because in some, uh, like the row crops, uh, lettuce, etc., the Teamsters had a lot of power to exert through the drivers, etc. And uh, having the sheds, the processing plants. But in others, like grapes, for example, uh, the Teamsters had minimal power, uh, and consequently we wouldn't have had the pressure to exert there.

17:31:13 When the dust had settle from '73 you had a whole bunch of new contracts, and naturally the Farm Workers had very few. Um, was that a stopping place for the Teamsters, or did you have other plans to expand in the fields?

17:31:34 No, we had other plans to go on. Primarily to uh, complete the organization. ...17:31:43 Primarily we wanted to complete the organization that we had started, and uh, normally what you've organized leads you to necessarily organize something else that competes with it for example, and so consequently uh, in order to maintain your agreements, you have to organize the unorganized, in all industries, and farm labor is no exception to that.

17:32:09 So if you were moving ahead ... the political factor .. Jerry Brown ... law.

17:32:35 Well, I testified before Congress, the United States Congress uh, and uh, I testified in favor of bringing all of agricultural labor under the NLRA at that time. With special considerations for the rapidity in which the process moved, as opposed to uh, other stationary sort of industrial uh, complexes. So consequently we were in favor of it.

17:33:08 But that was on the national level. How did you respond to the issue of a law here in California?

17:33:13 We were in favor of it, depending on what the law was, just so it accounted for the peculiarities of the uh, industry.

17:33:22 Were the Teamsters able to play any significant role in the negotiations that led to the law?

17:33:31 Uh, no.

Complete sentence...

17:33:35 We weren't able to exert any unusual pressure (phone rings)

17:33:52 The campaign in '73 cost the Teamsters roughly 3 million dollars, and part of it was what you talked about as a social service program. What was that and why was it important?

17:34:07 Yes, um, I started that right at the beginning realizing that the farm laborers... 17:34:16 I started the social service program right at the

onset of that big drive, because I realized that many of the problems that the farm laborers had could not be answered by the collective bargaining agreement. And so I hired initially uh, five bona fide social service workers that had had extensive experience working with groups similar to the farm workers. And uh, eventually had a uh, crew of approximately 24 people, uh, representatives, all certified in uh, in their field, to handle social services. They were all social service workers. And uh, put them throughout the organization, so that we had a...

17:35:14 Normally when you organize people you don't think you have to provide social services; why would farm workers need this?

17:35:23 Well, uh, farm workers had a variety of problems, that is to say, some farm workers have a variety of problems. Uh, one being that a lot of them are from another country, they're from Mexico, they still have families in Mexico, and so forth. Also, they have language problem, that uh, they don't understand the availability of services, or how to access those services in this country. And consequently we had a rule, for example, among our representatives, if the farm laborer has a problem that isn't answered by the contract, you refer him to social service, you don't tell him we can't help you, you refer him to the social service, they'll decide if there's another way to help them. And so, consequently, uh, uh, we found that was the strongest part of our program, and that....

17:36:22 But there was one other controversial aspect ... tough looking guys ... who were those people and why were they there? ... Coachella and Delano ...

17:36:50 Uh, probably um, uh, number one I wasn't, the only time I went down there I got shot, and uh, so my first day there to look at what was happening, I was shot. And uh, so consequently if you stepped as I did uh, into that situation to get a look-see, you'd have seen that there was a lot of activity. For example, my first view of what was going on, I went to a camp [LIGHTS SWITCHED OFF] where people were supposed to ...

17:37:34 O.K. so in 1973 there was a pretty violent atmosphere, you get out on the picket line you get shot, and also the Teamsters are bringing on some guys on the picket line who look really menacing, who are these guys?

17:37:45 What, what happened was that the Farm Workers started a new tactic, uh, where we would sign a grower, uh, for example, a grape grower, in a particular area. And the people generally were housed in some housing complex in that area, in Coachella. And what they started doing was they would uh, bring old cars, for example, uh, into the streets in those areas, and um, a group of chanting people with the red bandannas and red flags, light the cars on fire when the workers were supposed to move out of the housing complex uh, and be transported to the fields. 17:38:31 So um, I had advised all of the area supervisors in the various areas that when that happened to escort the workers out of those areas, because it was uh, like being in the middle of a war zone, it looked like Los Angeles after the Rodney King thing. Uh, you'd move into that area, as I did to take a look-see for myself, and got shot the first morning I was shot in the head. And uh, cars were on fire on both sides of the street. Uh, people were chanting and yelling "huelga" waving red flags, red and black flags, there was smoke

and fire in all directions, and here the poor farm workers trying to move from the housing complex out to the field. So we made certain that they had escorts to move through those areas in .

17:39:23 But who were those people?

17:39:24 Those were lettuce truck drivers, uh, they were various people like that, that were acquaintances of the organizers who were in the field, and they were brought in to augment our organizing crews.

17:39:40 Now, internal difficulties and disagreements in the Farm Workers ... I'm wondering when you look at how smooth the Teamsters effort was, whether internal discussions ... Einer Mone ... was there a unanimous vision on how to proceed?

17:40:02 Um, the uh, we had continual discussions. Uh, the matter as to how to proceed was pretty much left to whoever was in charge of the operation. We consulted, like all other organizations, consult between various individuals, but primarily they were relying on those that were in charge of a particular area.

17:40:28 But I'm thinking about one situation, back to Salinas in '70, where publicly there seemed to be a disagreement with you and Einer Mone about letting the growers out of their contracts.

17:40:40 Yes. Yes it was, it wasn't apparent, it was a real disagreement between us...Oh, the disagreement was simply that, that the Teamsters had a

history of living by their agreements, that's one reason that many employers preferred them over other [PIC ROLL OFF] organizations. And uh, once you sign an agreement, that's what you live by for its term. And so consequently ...

CR 116, SR 55

17:41:13 Talking about internal disagreements in the Teamsters... Einer Mone wanted to back off because of image problems.

17:41:29 Well, uh, primarily that was uh, the day where liberal political viewpoints were in vogue. And you had the Kennedy's and so forth and so on that uh, had uh, saw in Cesar Chavez and advocate of the individual rights of farm workers, for example, and uh, so forth, and they were in vogue. Uh, and so consequently the pressure on the Teamsters uh, became fantastic, particularly that of the Catholic Church. Uh, the Catholic Church in my view, had uh, uh, having been a civil libertarian myself in the 50's, and I hadn't seen them anyplace. I was the guy that was on the NAACP board fighting my own members, uh, to advocate, and walking the picket lines for NAACP, and I didn't see any Catholic priests around. Well they had missed that whole phase uh, of the civil rights movement, and they weren't gonna miss this new Chicano movement uh, that was occurring, and so they jumped in, uh, the Mahoneys and uh, so forth, jumped in, to get there place on the placard.... 17:43:01 ...So anyway, the pressure that they brought was fantastic and I realized it, and so consequently it was that pressure that the uh, Teamsters on Mone's persuasion became particularly concerned about and thought we should withdraw, uh from the farm labor

situation. Uh, I disagreed, because our reasons for getting in were still valid, and uh, that is to protect what we had and expand it in the food processing industry, and uh, uh, to complete the organization we had started in the farm labor. And, um, I felt we could do it much better than Chavez, and we were much more sophisticated in contract administration and so forth.... 17:43:54

...We had completely supplanted the sociological benefits to the farm workers, that he was doing ad hoc, we were doing it with professional social service workers, and I felt that that's where our impetus should be, to help the quote unquote Latin - American, and Filipino and whatever else groups were in the farm labor situation. So I felt we could do both things, that we could organize and also advance the social aspects uh, for the people, through a much more sophisticated representation system than Chavez had.

17:44:35 The Teamsters get out of the fields ... agreement signed in '79 ... you were contacted by Teamster leadership and asked your advice about whether you should go back in again, at this point you said "no" -- what were your reasons for that?

Well, my reasons were...

I need a complete sentence...

17:45:01 Yes, my reasons for advising the Teamsters, at that time Fitzsimmons had died, and Presser had become the general president of the Teamsters, and they had asked, uh, a series of meetings took place between Chavez and and Jess Carr. At that time I was the Executive Assistant to the Western Conference Director, had moved up in position in the organization, and uh, I had, after a series of meetings had taken place, and they then asked

me to help formulate a policy. Uh, I had advised, number one, against making an agreement with Chavez, coming to an agreement with him, a formal agreement uh, with him, and uh, to uh, uh, advocating our re-entrance into the farm labor program. And the reason I did is...

17:46:02 Did you suggest getting back in or staying out?

17:46:05 Uh, I suggested a method to get back in, if they were serious about getting back in, but I told them that I thought it would be a wasted effort, and a wasted time. In fact, my words to Presser was, they took place in a hotel at Las Vegas, where we were having a meeting, "if you are going to commit," as he had indicated "I'll commit whatever is necessary," and I said "if you took that 5 million or 9 million and put it in the middle of this floor here, and lit it, at least we'd get some heat out of it, you know we'd get a little warmth maybe. But I think that's exactly what you'll be doing if you go into the farm labor thing. At this point."

17:46:49 You spent, as you said, 38 years in the labor movement, and uh, a lot of that time was devoted to organizing labor and organizing farm workers. So looking back over the whole period, what do you think was accomplished by all that?

17:47:06 Well, I think that uh, as far as farm labor was, uh, the only accomplishment, the only real accomplishment, that uh, resulted, was uh, a temporary one, during the period of time primarily that we were both in the field. It enhanced the farm laborer himself in his bargaining power, and he took advantage of it. He negotiated some deals even better than the ones

that we were negotiating. And also, it enhanced, possibly, his position socially. And uh, uh, by bettering his economic status uh, primarily, and also drawing the attention of uh, the country to the plight of farm workers, matters of the pesticide, etc., and so forth...

17:48:01 ...But uh, as I advised Presser not to get back into it, uh, at that late date, uh, the reason I advised him is I thought we would not be successful in uh, accomplishing what we had set out to do, because we had stopped and started too many times. And uh, that no one would believe us that we were serious and that we intended to be there to stay, because we'd said that twice before, or three times before, and we had withdrawn. For one reason.

17:48:37 Do you think that if the United Farm Workers tried to seriously get back in they would face the same credibility problem?

17:48:45 I don't think they could succeed for different reasons...

Again, I need a complete sentence...

17:48:52 Yeah, I don't think the United Farm Workers could get back in to (coughs) organizing in farm labor today, uh, without a great deal of difficulty uh, being successful. For a variety of reasons. Uh, the first reason is the nature of the industry itself. Uh, you can't organize a little bit of the agricultural industry. You have to go after it in a large scale way to organize it....

17:49:26 ...And uh, secondly, uh, you can't scare to death the industry that you are trying to organize. Uh, you have to have a philosophy that

though they may not like, they will not at least be frightened uh, by. The uh, philosophy that the Farm Workers had, that contributed to almost all of their difficulty with employers, was not the fact the employer didn't want to be organized alone, which is a deterrent in itself, but the fact that they didn't want HIM to organize them, because of his philosophy. And that was what I had referred to initially as uh, his philosophy based on the Alinsky school of social revolution, which essentially does not allow anything to become static....

17:50:22 ...So, employers are interested in stability in the workforce. They're used to wrestling when the agreement is open or when an agreement opens, wrestling for the best advantage they can get. The union, on the other hand is interested in advancing the workers' situation as best they can. But once that's done, then the employer expects to have, one, two, three years, whatever the term of the agreement is, of stability. And disputes are re- ... resolved by arbitration, normally. So there's no disruption of the work process. On the other hand, Chavez's philosophy was if it's worth a fight, it's worth wrestling for, and we want to be free to wrestle. So if you have a three year agreement, that only doesn't mean anything, we want to be able to make another demand during the term of the agreement, and another demand tomorrow after that is acceded to, and this process continues. The instability that results from a business standpoint, uh, is one that the employer doesn't want and will do anything he can to avoid it. So, until that organization moves more toward a more traditional philosophy, they will have that as the greatest problem to organizing. And ...

17:51:42 A lot of people made the observation that it wasn't a union, it was a movement.

17:51:54 The Farm Workers union was a movement that had evolved into a union, but hadn't lost its movement characteristics, and so consequently, it didn't lend to a stable industrial situation. [PIC ROLL OFF} Uh, it lended toward a perpetual wrestling match between ... the employer and the union.

[SOUND ONLY]

Can you envision a set of circumstances where it would make sense for the Teamsters to go back in and try and fill in those gaps and somehow say "we're gonna be here for good," does that make sense at some point?

But uh, uh, if I didn't know the Teamsters now I would say it could be, but right now the Teamsters have such an internal struggle that, that is, takes precedence over any other consideration. ... You see if you knew the history of the Teamsters, which I'm sure you do ... But, the Teamster truck driver resisted like hell the warehousemen ever coming into the Teamsters, the dock guys, the guys that loaded the freight onto the truck, "oh, we don't, they're not like us, you know, you know, we are drivers, you know, and these bastards just push, you know, hand trucks around," and they resisted like a son-of-a-bitch, till finally somebody finally got it across to 'em that they were part of the crew, you know, and you should have 'em. So, O.K., then they came in, "but not those bastards inside the warehouse." See, and somebody said, "well wait a minute, if you have the warehouse, and you have the dock, and you have the truck, you've got more power," you know,

“no way, you know, those are warehousemen.” You know, so anyway, that’s what you’re fighting. ...

Sort of the mindset between a craft union and ...

That’s right, and so... now move that to food processing, and it’s even more remote. Uh, you know, to tell this guy, this driver, that we should get involved in farm labor, is like telling you that I think you should be out there fishing off of that thing for a living, just walk that wall and catch as many little fish as you can... It’s so foreign to what they’re thinking and doing, and their life experience, that it’s a, it’s a problem. We had a moment when we could have succeeded. And farm labor today would have not been what you see out there. It had been 90% mechanized. Instead of the 365,000 farm laborers in California, and about another 80,000 that are permanent people that work on farms, you’d have probably been down to at peak maybe 200,000, and uh, an average crew of more like uh, maybe 150- to 125,000, with that other 80,000 that’s back there. But it would have been a job worth doing. It’s one that you and I could have learned to do, and uh, without breaking our necks out there. So, the tomato machines were coming in, all covered and air-conditioned, out in the fields, you know, and so forth, and much of the process, also, they had figured out ways to eliminate the hoeing, the weeds, you know and so forth, by just the way they planted, and uh, so that everything was being done in plastic, you know, the seed is there, the herbicide is there, everything is there, you roll that out, and there’s no weeding to be done, only the lettuce comes through...

Tell us this moment when things could have...

That's the moment. You know, there's moments in history when you can get something done, and then there's moments when you can't do anything. But we had everything. We had the food processing, and uh, I had organized the last area that was unorganized in California, Sebastopol (??), all the apple industry? I organized that. And 22 plants, it took me 22 months, and uh, an 8 month strike. But I got that organized. That was all the canneries, all the dehydrators, all the packing sheds in Sebastopol, that was the last big area. And I did that in 1954 -55 - and 56. And uh, so consequently, everything was organized, uh, in California, the contracts were at their best, the packing sheds were all organized, and now was the time as the product moved into the field, to just follow it, organize it, bring it under contract, expand those contracts, further force that automation, that would have made 'em decent jobs for people instead of a killing job. And so forth, so, uh, that was the time. That was my disagreement with Mone. Now is the time. Tomorrow may not be the same. And uh, we had 271 employers under contract, I had 90 organizers in the field, 5 offices, I had 5 area supervisors, I had 5 social service programs, all coordinated, all moving at the same time, and we ran, you know, we ran away from it. And with it Chavez failed. So we weren't helping Chavez by getting out because he failed. And the employers, Andy Church, the last conversation I had with him, I went down as arbitrator, I don't know why in the hell he ever accepted me, as an arbitrator, in basic vegetable. And uh, went down there and I had a talk with him, and I said what about this new act in California? He said "That's a joke, we can tie 'em up, they win an election, they'll never see a contract, it's a joke." And I said, I, I thought so. You know... so there was a moment when it could have been done to the glory of the farm laborer, and it slipped. And it can't be done, I've been advising against it ever since, not for any other reason than I think it would fail... Oh, I want it to be done, but it would fail. The pieces aren't there, uh, to put it together, they're not there. And uh, of course now, uh, liberal is the dirtiest word, uh, you know in the dictionary, politically, uh, you know, so if you are not middle of the road or conservative, you're in the wrong place, you know, at the wrong time.