

TAPE ARC -18, TC 10:00:00

ABC NEWS, REEL 210: "CESAR CHAVEZ STORIES"

1968, CESAR breaks fast with mass, RFK attending:

10:09:36 PRIEST: ...we ask you to look with favor upon our cause, because it is the cause of Christ, the cause of the humble and the poor. We ask you for this help in the spirit of your son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with us, amen. ...

10:15:39 ROBERT KENNEDY: ...my great admiration for Cesar Chavez, and with all the problems that we have in this country, and with all the problems that we have in the world, that this man has sacrificed as he has, uh, against violence, and against lawlessness, and that the effort he has made on behalf of people who suffer so tremendously in this country, [PIC ROLL OFF] namely so many of our farm workers,[PIC BACK] and particularly the Mexican - Americans and others of minority groups who have not had the protection of the laws, with the great troubles that are taking place in our country, I think this is a very bright spot.

10:16:18 REPORTER: Do you feel a change will be made?

10:16:21 ROBERT KENNEDY: In what way, in the passage of laws? I think it's very difficult, I mean I'd love to be able to come here and promise that that's going to happen, but what I think that we do, what we need is some federal legislation that would be comparable to the legislation that we passed in the 1930's

for the other workers in this country. And the fact is that we haven't done that and the result is that the farm workers have suffered, and they've suffered and grown much more slowly economically than any other segment of our society. It's terribly unfair, and very unreasonable and very, very unjust. And these people have suffered tremendously. And I think we need legislation. Whether we will pass legislation, whether we will recognize the injustice, I think is still questionable. But we're thirty years behind in this area over the rest of the economy.

10:17:07 REPORTER: Are you very familiar with the farmers' problems in this situation?

10:17:10 ROBERT KENNEDY: I was here two years ago, and we held rather extensive hearings here and elsewhere in the country, so I think I'm familiar with them.

10:17:16 REPORTER: Senator, what was your conversation with Cesar this morning?

10:17:19 ROBERT KENNEDY: I just, uh, a few minutes. He just, we spoke about today, and that he's hopeful that uh, that the efforts that so many of them are making are going to be successful.

10:17:34 REPORTER: When did you find out about...

10:17:36 ROBERT KENNEDY: I knew when he went on uh, the fast, uh, at the beginning, and I sent him a telegram at that time, because I was concerned

about his health. And I think he's needed that kind of influence, that's committed to non-violence and committed to trying to perform some good for his people that's desperately needed for these people and for the country as a whole. And then about a week ago he got in touch with me and asked me if I would come out...[Q: telephone?] No, he was unable to talk on the telephone as I understood.

10:18:12 ROBERT KENNEDY: I think, I would like to say that they will, I think that it's going to be difficult, as I say they are thirty years behind...

10:18:31 ROBERT KENNEDY: ...so the result is they've been ignored, and the result is they've suffered tremendously, and while the rest of the economy has gone ahead, and the rest of the union, the rest of the people have been able to organize themselves, these people have not been able to.

10:18:59 ROBERT KENNEDY: [Q: on non-violence] ...Yes, I would hope that we would, and I think that Cesar Chavez has been a good example. I think people are frustrated, and I think they're terribly disturbed by the fact that they haven't had more success and that the federal government in Washington has not been helpful to them and that the state has not been helpful to them. This is not only true here but also elsewhere in the country, so that there is this frustration there is apt to be this explosion. I think that the, Cesar Chavez has been very influential, but I think that in the last analysis the answer is that we pass the laws that will remedy the injustices. That's what we should do, that's what those of us in Washington should do. We shouldn't just deplore the violence, and deplore the lawlessness, we should pass the laws that remedy what people riot about. We can't have violence in the country, but we should also not have these injustices.

