

AMCBW and its local unions have contracts with thousands of employers in the meat, retail, poultry, egg, canning, leather, fish processing, and fur industries.

AMCBW FARMWORKERS

Our union also includes some farmworkers. In fact, until recently, we had the only labor-management contract existing between a large corporation farm and a union. We are delighted that the successes of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO) has broken our monopoly.

Our local 56 in New Jersey organized Seabrook Farm in Bridgeton in 1941. Since then, some dozen labor-management contracts have been negotiated by the management and the union without a strike. The local union and the management are currently in contract negotiations.

May I interject here, Mr. Chairman. I am going to quote Leon Schachter, president of the local. He had planned to be here. However, he is serving on the Presidential Commission on Food and Fiber. He and the other Commission members are working in New Orleans today on their final report. So he sends his regrets he could not be here.

Leon B. Schachter, president of local 56, a vice president of the international union and director of our Washington office, wrote about the organizing drive in a union publication in 1957. He reminisced that Seabrook's cannery workers had originally asked him and the other AMCBW organizer to help them form a union.

But he found that—

Not only Seabrook's cannery workers wanted a union, the farmworkers, who were earning as little as 15 cents per hour, wanted to organize, also.

There were no labor laws to help them. There could be no election to determine the bargaining agent . . . Farmworkers are outside this protective legislation. They are second-class citizens, who need protection the most, and get it the least . . .

But the Seabrook family, which owns and manages Seabrook Farm, was not medieval. (The family has since sold the farm to Seaman Brothers.) It did not meet local 56's organizing drive with blind, frenzied counterattack. Once it realized that its employees wanted a union, and that the union was coming, it was willing to abide by the workers' decision and try out the new force.

This was not true of other large farms which local 56 attempted to organize. The drive, as most farm labor organizing campaigns, was met with "blind, frenzied counterattack." The growers stopped the drive, but at the expense of some of the farms going out of business. Unlike at Seabrook, there was desperate, bitter warfare. There was no means of adjudicating the issue of union representation peacefully.

None exists even today.

NAWU IN OUR UNION

In 1960 the National Agricultural Workers Union, the successor to the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, became a part of the AMCBW. The STFU and NAWU have a long history of attempting to organize farmworkers against fantastic odds and opposition in the 1930's, 1940's, and early 1950's. They were embroiled in bitter warfare, including strikes which lasted more than 2 years each.