

**STATEMENT OF JOE SERDA, CHAIRMAN, RANCH COMMITTEE,
SIERRA VISTA RANCH, DELANO, CALIF.**

Mr. SERDA. Before I start, Mr. Chairman, I would like, with your permission, to explain a little bit about myself, and then we will go into the testimony.

My name is Joe Serda. I have been working in the Delano area since 1934. I started working for DiGiorgio in 1953; well, I worked 9 years there, and then I quit and came back in 1962 and worked up until the present time.

Many people have asked me at different times why is it that being a foreman I choose to help the strike. Of course, there are many reasons, but I would only like to take time to cite one.

Not too many years ago, we were picking juice grapes, or otherwise known as gondola picking. We had local people there, and I remember my supervisor told me he wanted me to put a lot of pressure on the workers. I didn't understand why he wanted to do this because I believe we were a little short of men in those days.

So, when I asked him, he says, "Joe, you don't understand. If we can get these people to quit, we can show the Labor Department that we have not got any help, and then we can get braceros."

From that day on, I lost quite a bit of respect for that man. This is only one example. Of course, there are hundreds of others, like a man getting fired because he went up to the boss and told him he was short on his paycheck, or he was overcharged on his board.

In the early part of 1966, DiGiorgio held a general meeting of all the fieldworkers and packing workers. In this meeting, I noticed that there were, well, important-looking people that I took to be reporters or probably even Senators, I didn't know who they were. In this meeting, the company told us that they were not opposed to us having a union or voting for a union; they told us that we were free to pick a union and to vote for a union and that no hard feelings would be held against any worker.

When they told us this, me and a lot of workers were very happy about it, so we started going to union meetings. We came to find out the hard way that this was not true at all. We were told this but a lot of our people were fired.

For example, a case that really stuck in my mind was the case of Manuel Campos. We went to a meeting one time in the summer and we made the mistake of leaving the door open. Evidently somebody who was watching our meeting place saw Manuel Campos in there and the next day he was fired. He was asked why he had gone to this meeting and who was at the meeting and he refused to give the names of the other workers. He was fired but he was told that he was being fired because he had had a fight with a lady, a female, who had been living there at the camp.

We also lost a lot of workers who the company found out were going to union meetings. For example, I understand taking a radio to the field I should not think would be a reason for being fired. It was very common in Sierra Vista to take a radio to the field; no one would ever complain. But after the union started, then people started being fired for taking a radio into the field. I should not think this would be a reason for being fired.