

Mr. THOMPSON. We have just passed such a law in New Jersey. Please proceed, Mrs. Huerta.

Mrs. HUERTA. There is one other answer to your previous question about the difference in contracts.

Another important provision is that in our hiring hall setup we refer workers to the company. Now, in the Perelli-Minetti contract, the company has the right to reject any worker that is sent out by the union hall without any reason at all. Now, in our contract, it cannot reject a worker.

The company has a right to fire a worker if he does not perform his work satisfactorily but they cannot reject a worker just because they want to.

Mr. THOMPSON. Do you have any grievance procedures?

Mrs. HUERTA. Yes; very satisfactory, and it involves the steward who is himself a worker. Furthermore, our discharge policy is very strong.

Since we know that it will take the companies a while to adjust the contracts and working relations with the union, we have a clause that says that before a worker can be fired, the union steward must be consulted and must be told the reason why he is going to be fired. This is interesting because we have instances where a supervisor will want to go out and want to fire the whole crew and say, you are all fired. He may be mad at his wife and fire the whole crew. You cannot do this now, fire the whole crew. This is what happened before; they would probably all get fired.

Mr. THOMPSON. He probably kicks his dog now.

Mrs. HUERTA. That is our hardest problem, to get them used to the idea that they cannot push people around any more and they have to look at the worker like a man.

Going back to the elections, we have other elections that are now pending and we think that they will probably come off without too much incident, hopefully, as this goes along. In our contracts, we cover the whole industrial unit from the picker to the tractor driver, the irrigator, packing worker; all part of one industrial unit. This is the trend we have started in our contracts.

Mr. THOMPSON. What sort of requirement do you have for skilled workers, and what do they do? Are there people in your union who repair machinery and have special skills which the pickers don't have?

Mrs. HUERTA. Yes. We have mechanics and carpenters and plumbers, and all these people are included in our contract.

Of course, it is understood that their wages are very, very much below what they are in comparable AFL-CIO skilled trade contracts but at Schenley we got a 35-cent increase and at DiGiorgio we got a 25-cent increase over what they were getting before, so the wages are still very substandard but higher now for people with special skills.

What we try to do is upgrade from the ranks. One of the things that we have to contend with is that there is a tremendous amount of discrimination in the fields against the Mexican, Filipino, and the Negro worker, so that you will often find that you have all of the Mexican, Negro, and Filipino people working in the field and then you will have all the Anglo people driving tractors and doing the lighter work and the work that pays a little bit better.