

President's Newsletter

Office of the President
United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO
La Paz, Keene, California 93531



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AGRICULTURAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

Victory at State's Largest Citrus Company

The union celebrated its 16th anniversary with a major election victory on March 31. Workers at Coastal Growers Association, the state's largest citrus employer, voted overwhelmingly to be represented by the UFW in a secret ballot election held at the company's Oxnard labor camp.

The workers voted 897 for the UFW and 42 for no union. Twenty-two ballots were challenged and three were declared void. The company is a harvesting association that provides workers to five of the major packing houses in the area.

The Coastal Growers election was the third case involving use of a provision of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act that provides for expedited elections when 50% or more of the workers at a ranch walked out on strike demanding union representation. After the ALRB investigates the strike and declares it legitimate, an election must be ordered within 48 hours.

All of the company's 1300 workers (32 crews) walked off the job on March 29 and asked the UFW to represent them. That day the union filed 832 authorization cards and the election was ordered for the following Friday (March 31).

Thursday evening (March 30) we travelled to the company's Oxnard labor camp to address 800 farm workers in a packed camp recreation room. We told the workers that their victory was a victory for all farm workers. We said the strike was a testimony to the workers' courage and determination to be free. The law is the means of building the union, we stated, and only through the union can farm workers realize their hopes and aspirations.

The Coastal Growers workers would not be alone when they voted, we reminded the workers. The sacrifice and suffering of past generations of farm workers would be on their shoulders; the freedom of future generations would be in their hands.

After the election results were tallied, we issued a statement to the press noting that the March 31 vote signalled the beginning of a major organizing drive throughout the state. It is tragic, we said, that the Assembly Ways and Means Subcommittee in Sacramento had voted on March 29 to cut essential functions from the budget of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (see article which follows). These funding cuts mean that some farm workers will not be able to enjoy the protections of the law.

Following the election the workers did not return to work immediately, but demanded certification of the UFW as the collective bargaining representative.

On April 5, the union and Coastal Growers Association issued a joint statement announcing that both parties had asked the Agricultural Labor Relations Board to certify the results of the election so bargaining for a contract could begin swiftly.

The CGA workers returned to work when the joint petition was filed.

Both sides expressed hope that the ALRB would act quickly to certify the election returns and that the planned negotiations would result in a speedy resolution of the company-union dispute.

Signing the joint statement were *Jack Lloyd*, manager of

CGA, and UFW Second Vice President *Eliseo Medina*.

Workers at a second citrus company in the Oxnard area repeated the Coastal Growers incident two days later when all 66 workers walked out at Casitas Farming, Inc. The workers demanded an election under the same ALRB provision for an emergency within 48 hours.

The election, held April 2nd, resulted in 64 votes for the UFW, one vote for no union, and one challenged ballot. Credit for on-the-spot organizing in both unexpected elections goes to Second Vice President *Eliseo Medina* who was assisted by Brother *Bobby de la Cruz*.

Legislators Threaten ALRB Election Process

In a move reminiscent of the events leading to Proposition 14, pro-grower members of an Assembly Ways and Means subcommittee voted to cut essential items from the yearly budget of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board amounting to somewhere between \$1 and \$2 million out of a total \$9 million budget.

The subcommittee decided on March 29 to delete 35 professional positions (lawyers, field examiners) and related clerical jobs from the board's budget for the fiscal year 1978-79 despite repeated pleas by ALRB Chairman *Gerald Brown* and the UFW to leave the ALRB budget intact.

The legislators and the state legislative analyst argued that the general decrease in election activity during the previous budget year meant the board would not need as many staffers as it was proposing in the budget. Chairman *Brown* noted, however, that the ALRB would only have enough people to deal with the business of board at last year's level. The ALRB could function only so long as there were no new organizing drives. If organizing activities stepped up, Chairman *Brown* said, the board would have a hard time dealing with the workload.

ALRB Executive Secretary *Robert Faust* said, "We are not going to offer better services for next year. If (the farm workers) can live with the present level of services, we will be all right. But (because of the cuts) we have lost the flexibility to deal with larger organizing drives."

Faust said the legislative subcommittee "was not cutting nonessentials. They are cutting at essential points: the professional staff. Without professional staff we cannot deliver for the people who we serve: the farm workers."

New Egg City Election is Set

A new election for some 200 Egg City workers whose ballots were stolen from a previous election is set for mid-April in Ventura County and at the Mexican border.

The new election presents problems in locating the original voters, since it has been 2-1/2 years since the first election. UFW staff in the Oxnard area are presently trying to locate the voters who are spread across the state and Mexico. About 116 voters had been located as of April 4, many who are presently working with the company. About 30 voters who are scattered throughout Mexico will be able to vote at immigration offices at the Mexicali/Calexico border.

The outcome of the first election resulted in 114 votes for the UFW and 189 votes for the Teamsters. Of the challenged ballots 140 had been cast by workers who were on strike at the time. Another 60 votes had been challenged for other reasons. In October 1977, the ALRB ruled that 165 of the challenged ballots, including those of the economic strikers, should be counted. However, the ballot box disappeared before the votes could be counted.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of any of the workers whose ballots were challenged in the first Egg City election should contact the Oxnard UFW field office or the field office nearest to them.

Pleasant Valley Vegetable Co-op

Pleasant Valley Vegetable Co-op of Ventura County, which harvests lettuce and other row crops, was found by the ALRB to have discriminatorily refused to rehire or reinstate *Adalberto Gomez* after he had been laid off.

The unfair labor practice complaint charged that the employer reinstated workers with less seniority than *Gomez* and that new workers were hired before *Gomez* despite his repeated requests for work. The ALRB ordered the company to pay *Gomez* back wages including reimbursement for benefits he would have received, together with interest at a rate of 7%.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Farm Bureau's Double Standard Challenged

The California Farm Bureau Federation would not seem so ludicrous when it attacks the recent U.S. Labor Department English training grant to the National Farm Workers Service Center Inc., if it and its members were not the recipients of billions of dollars from the taxpayers over the years for everything from direct cash subsidies to publicly-financed mechanization research.

The first time the federal government offers to assist migrant farm workers by helping them learn English, the farm bureau reacts with righteous indignation. The farm bureau has consistently opposed the organizing of farm workers over the years and is one of the most anti-union organizations in the country.

We said that the farm bureau should send us a list of all the money and programs it and its members have received from the taxpayers over the years so the farm workers can know the extent to which our government is willing to assist its citizens.

The farm workers would be delighted to restrict the amount of assistance we request from our government to the amount of aid the farm bureau and its members have pocketed during the past four or five decades.

The farm bureau has a double standard and its members have no objections to receiving billions of dollars from the taxpayers for their own special interest programs. But let a federal agency offer to help the farm workers, and the bureau shakes with anger. The farm bureau advocates capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich.

Texas Growers Ask for More Braceros

Growers in Presidio, Texas who imported more than 800 foreign workers in June, 1977, are asking the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service for permission to import 2,000 foreign workers this year, Sister *Rebecca Harrington* of the National Farm Workers Service Center has reported from Texas.

Sources within the INS revealed that the growers are buying up hotels on the Mexican side of the border to circumvent federal housing requirements and pave the way for the importation of Mexican workers under the government's temporary foreign workers program.

U.S. regulations permit growers to bring across foreign workers only when the U.S. Department of Labor certifies that there are not enough American workers available to take the jobs. The regulations also require that employers pay farm workers minimum wages and provide decent housing.

Last year the Labor Department refused the Presidio growers' request for foreign workers because it said there were resident workers available and the growers had not lived up to the wage and housing standards. President *Carter* personally intervened to order INS to import the Mexican workers over Labor's objection. The UFW has vigorously opposed any increase in the temporary foreign workers program or a reimposition of the old bracero program.

Newsletter

The Newsletter is sent to all delegates and alternates from the 1977 Constitutional Convention and to the members of ranch and negotiating committees. In order to keep our mailing current, we have to know your new address each time you move. We have lost many people from our mailing list

because they moved without giving us a new address. Several weeks ago we sent many of you post cards to fill out. We still have not received many of these cards. The cards are the only way we can know for certain that you are receiving the newsletter. If we don't receive your card, we'll drop you from our list.

RFK MEDICAL PLAN

Who is covered by the RFK Medical Plan?

If a member or a member and his/her family have enough hours reported under UFW contract and payment was made to the Kennedy Plan for those hours, the entire family may be eligible for medical benefits under either Low, Medium or High Category Benefits, depending on whether they have not used more than the limits provided under each category.

The family in this case is the member and the spouse and dependent children living at home and supported by their parents until they reach their 19th birthday. A daughter 21 years old still living at home is not a dependent of her father under the Kennedy Plan. An unmarried son supporting his mother cannot receive benefits under the Kennedy Plan for her. A member cannot claim his brother's son under the Medical Plan unless the member is supporting his nephew and has legally adopted him.

Each person in the family as described above can receive whatever benefits they are eligible for with the exception of the Maternity Benefit. For the Maternity Benefit only a member or the spouse of the member is covered under the Kennedy Plan. No pregnancy expenses will be paid for a dependent child.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

Latest Elections

Coastal Growers Assn/Oxnard/citrus/UFW, 897; no union, 42; challenged ballots, 22; void, 3.

Casitas Farming Inc./Camarillo/citrus/UFW, 64; no union, 1; challenged ballots 1.

Alexander Valley Vineyards/Napa/wine grapes/UFW, 26; no union, 27; challenged ballots, 5.

New Certifications

Gourmet Harvesting and Packing/El Centro/asparagus/3-29-78

New Personnel

Name	Location	Department
Lois Pryor	No. Calif.	Boycott
Angel Rojas	La Paz	NFW Service Cntr.

BOYCOTT COORS BEER

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