

A.F.L.-C.I.O. BACKS COAST FARM UNIT

Merged Group Gets Charter in Fight With Teamsters

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CHICAGO, Aug. 23—The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations threw its strength and prestige today behind two merged California farm labor groups engaged in a bitter representation election battle with the Teamsters Union.

The council formally granted a charter to the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, which has been formed by the consolidation of the National Farm Workers Association led by Cesar Chavez, and the federation's Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee.

George Meany, president of the federation, said that granting the charter was an indication of organized labor's "concern in bringing some measure of economic justice to the forgotten men of our time"—the farm workers.

Later, at a press conference, Mr. Meany said that the federation had been contributing 150,000 a year toward the organization of farm workers in California and would continue to spend about the same amount. He recalled, however, that in the first two years of the organizing effort, in the late 1950's, the federation spent \$1.5-million.

William L. Kircher, the federation's director of organization, pledged a "massive and continuous organizing effort" among the farm workers and substantial assistance in both dollars and manpower to the drive.

Today's move by the council has particular significance at this time because of a showdown election next Tuesday in California between the merged organizing committee and the Teamsters.

At stake is the right to represent 2,200 agricultural workers employed by the Di Giorgio Corporation, the biggest employer of field hands in the Delano area.

Delano has been an organizing battleground since last year, when the National Farm Workers Association called a strike of grapeworkers there.

Backed at Convention

The strike received the support of the federation at its convention in San Francisco last December.

Subsequently, Walter P. Reuther, president of the United Automobile Workers, visited the area and pledged \$5,000 a month to the strikers, a contribution that has been continued, according to Mr. Chavez.

Schenley Industries and Christian Brothers, two other companies in the area, have already recognized the National Farm Workers as bargaining agent for their employes, but the outcome of the vote among the Di Giorgio employes is considered a crucial test for the merged group.

The Teamsters won an earlier election that the company called on its own on short notice. However, that vote was boycotted by members of the merging unions.

Gov. Edmund G. Brown called in Ronald W. Haughton, a veteran arbitrator and labor expert from Michigan, to investigate the first vote. Mr. Haughton recommended the new election that has been scheduled for next Tuesday in Borrego Springs, in the Delano area.

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