

FARM UNION VOTE DIVIDED ON COAST

U.F.W. Wins Two Elections and the Teamsters One Under New Law

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DELANO, Calif., Sept. 6—The United Farm Workers union won two elections and the rival International Brotherhood of Teamsters won one today in the first secret ballot representation voting held under California's new farm labor law, the first of its kind in the nation.

In each of the three elections, only one union was on the ballot. The U.F.W. received 121 votes at the Caratan ranch here; while 41 workers voted against having a union.

At the Dalton Richardson ranch near Bakersfield, about 50 miles south of here, the teamsters received 70 votes, while five voted against having a union. At the Brokaw nursery in Ventura, the U.F.W. received 40 votes to 15 voting for no union.

The elections today were the first of about 200 such elections to be held throughout the state.

The Caratan election began just as dawn broke over the lush grapefields of this San Joaquin Valley town where farm workers walked out of the grapefields 10 years ago on a strike that began a historic battle leading to today's elections.

Teamsters Not on Ballot

The teamsters were not on the ballot at Caratan even though they have held a contract there since 1973, as they have at the Richardson farm.

Yesterday, the teamsters attempted to get on the ballot in the Caratan election, meaning they believed they had at least 20 per cent of the workers signature on a petition. However, Barry Lennett, the board's regional director, said the teamsters had acted too late. A union can file to get on the ballot only up to 24 hours before an election. The U.F.W. filed the petition for this election on Tuesday.

As soon as the result was announced at about 10:20 A.M., a large group of Mexican-American and Yemenese field hands, who were waiting in 90-degree heat for the results, started chanting "Chavez Si, Teamsters No!" They were referring to the farm workers union president, Cesar Chavez, who has become a symbol of the movement for agricultural workers to gain the same rights to organize collective bargaining that industrial workers have had since 1936.

Ahmed Alharpi, a 20-year-old Yemenese immigrant who said he had been picking crops in California fields since he was 17, said, "I feel very, very good. Nobody's going to push the farm workers back any more."

Ben Maddock, the U.F.W.'s principal organizer in this area, said, "We're on the road back. Anywhere we're on the ballot we'll win."

He referred to the fact that the union lost a number of contracts, including one at this ranch originally won in 1970, to the teamsters in 1973 under disputed conditions.

Louis Caratan, president of the company that grows 1,000 acres of table grapes, plus wheat, barley and oranges, said, "Naturally I'm disappointed," indicating his hope that the workers would vote against the U.F.W. as their bargaining agent. But the 40-year-old rancher said, "We'll live with it."

Under the law, the election can be certified within five days and then a new collective bargaining process could begin.

The scene at the Richardson election was considerably tamer, owing in part to the fact that only about half as many workers voted and that the Agricultural Labor Relations Board's procedures being used for the first time went more smoothly.

The U.F.W. initially filed for this election, but later dropped off the ballot. Two years ago Juan Delacruz, a United Farm Workers member, was shot and killed while picketing during a strike near Mr. Richardson's grape fields.

At each location, ballots were printed in several languages, reflecting the ethnic makeup of the work force. At Caratan, Richardson and Brokaw, the ballots were printed in English and in Spanish. At Caratan, the ballots were also printed in Arabic, and at Richardson, they were printed in Tagalog, a Philippine language.

At Caratan and at Brokaw there were two choices on the ballot: U.F.W. and "no union." Ballots there contained the black eagle symbol of the U.F.W. and a highway "Do Not Enter" road sign (circle with a slash mark and the word "no" for a "no union" vote. The ballot at Richardson contained the teamster symbol of horses as well as the road sign designation.

It is expected that the two unions will have their first head-to-head election clash at a table grape ranch in this area early next week. There could be up to 100 elections and perhaps more by the end of the month in this area and in Salinas, a vegetable-growing region about 200 miles west of here.

Voting was conducted at each ranch by five agents from the agricultural board, which was formed this summer after the Legislature passed the secret ballot elections law.

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