

FARM UNION STRIFE SEEN DESPITE LAW

Ruling of California Board Called U.F.W. Victory

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SACRAMENTO, Calif., Aug. 30 — California's new farm labor law went into effect this week, but two days of hearings on its provisions indicated that the controversy, after a decade of strife in the state's \$6-billion industry, was far from over.

The law, enacted in June, gives farm workers the right for the first time to ask for secret ballot elections for the union of their choice or to vote against a union.

The United Farm Workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the two unions battling to sign up field hands, are expected to submit petitions on Tuesday from a number of ranches, indicating

that workers want elections. An election must be held within one week after the petition is received by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, created to administer the new law.

Over the protest of several major farm groups, the board ruled late yesterday that union organizers would be allowed access to workers in the fields 60 minutes before work, 60 minutes after work and during lunch breaks.

This was the board's first major ruling, and it came one day after the five members officially took office, and followed 14 hours of public hearings.

The farmers did not want union organizers in their fields, and the teamsters had asked for "designated areas" where union organizers and workers could meet.

The compromise ruling was seen as a partial victory for the U.F.W., which had asked for total access to the farms for union organizers.

At least 40 U.F.W. organizers have been arrested this month

on trespassing charges. In addition, two of the organizers and a union lawyer were arrested at a Border Patrol Office when they attempted to talk to 32 workers who had been picked up on suspicion of being illegal aliens.

Intimidation Charged

The police said they had been making routine searches for stolen property in labor camps, with the cooperation of ranchers, when they picked up the workers. The U.F.W. charged that the action was intended to intimidate workers who had signed cards indicating their preference for the U.F.W.

Pete Backlig, a teamster representative, said seven men from his union had also been arrested on trespassing charges. However, the teamsters have had greater access in most cases because they hold about 400 contracts, covering 60,000 to 70,000 workers, compared with 12 for the U.F.W., and their representatives are often able to solicit workers to sign election signature cards while

servicing the contracts in the fields.

Some lawyers for the farmers said they would advise their clients that they did not have to obey the access rule because they felt it exceeded the board's authority and violated property rights.

Rod Blonien, executive director of the California Peace Officers Association, said that if law enforcement agents found a conflict between existing laws against trespassing and new rules issued by the farm labor board, the laws against trespassing would be given priority.

Many farmers feel that the Most Rev. Roger Mahony, a Roman Catholic bishop who is board chairman, and LeRoy Chatfield, one of the board members, are aligned with the U.F.W. cause, Bishop Mahony because he was on the staff of the National Catholic Bishops Farm Labor Committee, considered by some farmers to be pro-U.F.W., and Mr. Chatfield because for several years he was an administrative aide to

Cesar Chavez, president of the U.F.W.

The others named by Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. to the \$42,500-a-year posts are:

Richard Johnsen, a farmer. Joseph Grodin, a professor of labor law who once represented teamster clients.

Joseph Ortega, a lawyer for the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund, who is director of Urban Legal Aid programs in East Los Angeles.

The Department of Agriculture reports that 2.8 million people work on the nation's farms during a year. Only 500,000 of these can be considered professionals who earn all or most of their livelihood from such work. Currently no law gives these workers, outside of California, the right to organize and bargain collectively with their employers.

The California union elections will involve 40,000 to 50,000 workers, of the total farm labor force of 280,000.

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