

Farm Workers Maintain Lead Over Teamsters in Coast Vote

FRESNO, Calif., Jan. 2 (AP) —California's new farm-labor election process was responsible for 376 labor elections on individual farms during its first four months of effectiveness, according to statistics compiled by The Associated Press.

The United Farm Workers won more than half of those elections, receiving 54 percent of all votes cast, with the Teamsters union receiving 29 percent of the total vote. Seventeen percent of the ballots were for no union representation.

The U.F.W. had 185 victories covering 18,000 workers, compared with the Teamsters' 110 victories covering 11,000 workers, according to the survey.

The "no union" option of the ballot won a majority at 25 farms employing 2,000 workers. Eight elections were won by miscellaneous unions, and 48 remain undecided because of challenged ballots.

N.L.R.B. Record

Officials of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, the agency that administers the act, like to point out that the National Labor Relations Board conducted only 203 elections during its first year in the 1930's.

Agricultural employment was not covered by the National Labor Relations Act, and the California law has therefore resulted in the first massive farm-labor elections in the nation.

Growers and the Teamsters union contend that the board

and its staff favor the United Farm Workers, and U.F.W. officials charge that some decisions have favored the growers or the Teamsters.

Growers have opened a drive for amendments to the act, which was adopted by the California Legislature last spring after a decade of farm union organization strife.

Violence at a Minimum

Supporters of the law note that, despite controversy over its implementation, violence has been kept at a minimum during the election process, which began in early September.

The Farm Workers, led by Cesar Chavez, and the Teamsters stayed fairly even during the first few weeks of balloting at table-grape and lettuce farms, which had been focal points of their rivalry for years.

But the U.F.W. steadily pulled ahead as its organizers forced elections at farms throughout the state. The Teamsters concentrated on retaining bargaining rights at the numerous farms where the union had contracts.

The election victories do not guarantee contracts for the winning unions, but only exclusive bargaining rights for one year.

Little negotiating has been conducted yet because most crops are past peak harvest and because unfair-labor-practice complaints have slowed the state certifications required to make each election result official.