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SCHENLEY VICTORY

By Dick Meister
Labor Correspondent

California's farm workers reached a major milestone yesterday, signing of the first labor agreement between a grower and the National Farm Workers Association.

The one-year pact, one of the few of its kind ever signed with a major firm by any farm union covers field workers at Schenley Industries vineyards in the Delano, Kern county, area.

Wages, now roughly \$1.40 to \$1.50 an hour, will go up 35 cents immediately for the 60 to 500 men and women who work in the vineyards, depending on the season.

Of more importance to the association than specific wage rates are the terms granting it a union shop – meaning that all workers employed by Schenley now or who will work there in the future will join the association.

This has been the association's main demand in the strikes it began nine months ago against Schenley and 33 other grape growers in the Delano region.

Schenley, second in size among the struck growers, agreed in April to recognize the association. Since then, union and employer negotiators have been working out a contract.

The document signed yesterday is a one-page "memorandum of agreement" on what will be written into a contract later by technicians.

Union officials likened it to a similar one-page agreement signed in the 2930s by General Motors and the United Auto Workers Union – a historic milestone in the unionization of industrial workers.

The agreement grants a key union demand that Schenley no longer hire workers through labor contractors but get them all – when possible – from the association.

Schenley also agreed to deduct \$3.50 a month in union dues from each of its workers after they authorize it.

It will be through the dues, rather than from Schenley, that workers will get such fringe benefits as life insurance, membership in a credit union and care at a union-operated health clinic.

The agreement, negotiated with the help of the AFL-CIO's top national organizers, was signed at the office of the AFL-CIO's Los Angeles County Federation by association director Cesar Chavez and Schenley attorney Sidney Korshak.

It's not clear whether it will set a pattern for the agreements being demanded of the struck grape growers by the association.

None of them, in any case, has agreed to join Schenley in negotiating with the association.

One non-struck grower, Christian Brothers in Napa, has agreed, but its negotiations with the association have not been completed

A new farm labor battle shaped up yesterday between two old union adversaries – the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO.

The opening shot was delivered in Burlingame by Director Einar Mohn of the Teamsters' Western Conference.

He called the merger announced Wednesday between the AFL-CIO's Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and the independent National Farm Workers Association “a desperate attempt on the part of the AFL-CIO” to “revive their faltering” farm efforts.

AFL-CIO officials, who had called the merger an “historic” event in benefit of farm workers, declined to comment on Mohn's charter.

But Director Cesar Chavez of the National Farm Workers Association pointedly complained that the Teamsters, now attempting to sign up workers at the vineyards his group has struck for ten months, came along late in the game.