

FARM UNION VOTE SET ON THE COAST

Teamsters and A.F.L.-C.I.O. Vie in Tuesday Election

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SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 27—The stage was set this weekend and rehearsals were completed for a drama of major significance in California's strife-marked farm labor history.

To be witnessed next Tuesday is a performance that may go far in determining whether the time is finally at hand for long-resisted unionization of the army of fieldhands in the state's agricultural valleys.

Against a background of increasing bitterness between the American Federation of Labor Congress of Industrial Organizations on one hand and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters on the other, employes of the Di Giorgio Corporation in the Delano area of the sun-baked San Joaquin Valley will vote in a collective bargaining election.

Committee Chartered

To present a united front against the teamsters' the A.F.L. C.I.O. Executive Council, meeting in Chicago early this week, chartered a new merged organizing committee to resist the drive of the James R. Hoffa union to add farm laborers by the thousands to its already varied membership.

While the A.F.L.-C.I.O. session was taking place, Einar O. Mohn, director of the Western Conference of Teamsters, was conducting a news conference at the San Francisco Press Club voicing confidence in a teamster victory.

Later, on his return from Chicago to Delano following the council meeting, William L. Kircher, national director of organization for the A.F.L.-C.I.O., declared in a telephone interview:

"Under normal circumstances, where we would have the National Labor Relations Board and the law acting in such an election, we would win very easily. But this election is a little harder to predict. There is no law to keep this historically antilabor company from its love match with the teamsters."

What Mr. Kircher referred to was a situation in which the teamsters' union has been called a "company union" and in which Robert Di Giorgio, president of the big Di Giorgio Corporation, has stated publicly that "the best interests of its employes and the company will be served by teamster affiliation, if the majority of its employes wish to affiliate with a union."

The election is being conducted by the American Arbitration Association, at whose office in this city the ballots of those among the 2,200 eligible employes who vote will be counted on Wednesday.

The Di Giorgio workers, who

avored the teamsters in a June election that was boycotted by some of the anti-teamster groups, will be able this time to vote for "no union" or for the teamster or for the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

The earlier election was voided and a new one agreed upon after Gov. Edmund G. Brown brought in Prof. Ronald Haughton of the University of Michigan to investigate.

The federation, which spent \$1.5-million in the late 1950's trying to organize California farm laborers and has continued allocating funds to its Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, has approved a merger of this committee with the National Farm Workers Association.

This is the family association, led by 39-year-old Cesar Chavez and consisting largely of Mexican-Americans, that participated in a strike that began last September in the Delano area vineyards. It sponsored a 25-day, 300-mile pilgrimage ending on the Capitol steps at Sacramento with an Easter Sunday rally.

The Chavez organization, consolidated with the committee, now has been chartered as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

Conflicting ideas were expressed by spokesmen for the new organization and the teamsters toward their unionization drives.

At his San Francisco press conference, Mr. Mohn declared that much of the farm land being planted and harvested was under ownership or lease by the big corporate growers with which the teamsters' union already has canning, packing and freezing contracts. Once the Di Giorgio fight was settled, these other growers would be approached, he promised.

"It is going to be very difficult to separate agricultural workers and those engaged in processing," he said.

Mr. Kircher took the position that should the teamsters take over California's farm labor, "the farm workers would be simply a small grain of sand on the beach at Miami when the teamsters hold their convention."