

Personnel shakeup in ALRB viewed by 'sides'

ALRB office has shakeup in personnel

By JOHN NUNES
Staff writer

The state Agricultural Labor Relations Board is apparently in the midst of a personnel shakeup, particularly at its El Centro office, state, union and grower sources report.

This has resulted in mismanagement and has reduced the effectiveness of the state agency, at least in El Centro, the sources claim.

But other sources say staff changes are being made to eliminate favoritism and upgrade efficiency. To no one's surprise, ALRB employes have been charged with being pro-union by growers and pro-grower by unions.

Still others, including one top official in Sacramento, say the problem stems from a bid for power by ALRB General

See PERSONNEL, page 2

(Continued from page 1)
Counsel Harry Delizonna.

His power base widened when Annie Gutierrez resigned this month from her position as executive secretary to the ALRB. The Valley native took a top job with the Carter Administration.

Her resignation may have triggered the personnel shakeup.

The young state agency is headed by a five-man board. Two offices, the executive secretary's and the general counsel's, carry out the board's policies.

A successor to Gutierrez has yet to be named.

Meanwhile, the ALRB regional director in San Diego, Gonzalo Molina, resigned effective Feb. 25.

And Fred Lopez, from the general counsel's office, has replaced Byron Giorgio as head of the El Centro office.

Also, Maurice Jourdane is no longer general counsel's director of operations. Delizonna said Jourdane volunteered to change his duties with the agency. "He'd rather be a trial lawyer instead of a staff person. There's nothing unusual about that."

Delizonna refused to confirm or deny rumors that a wholesale staff change in El Centro was being considered.

ALRB agent Carlos Bowker was fired Tuesday. Delizonna declined to give a reason, explaining that Bowker has the right to appeal the firing to the state Personnel Board.

"I'd prefer not to say anything about Bowker until after he appeals, if he does," Delizonna explained.

"Everyone with the ALRB is on probation," the ALRB's chief attorney stated. Delizonna explained that all state employes are subject to probationary periods.

Review time is here for ALRB agents, he said and suggested that this could have given rise to "rumors."

When asked if he was replacing staff in El Centro, Delizonna remarked, "discipline problems are none of your business."

Another top state official said "Delizonna is the problem."

The United Farm Workers

and growers spokesmen have been critical of the general counsel.

"It's wrong for Delizonna to be going after people who bust their ass to see that the law is enforced," said Marshall Ganz, a national UFW director. He is currently directing union activities in the Valley.

"The issue is not competence, the issue is loyalty to Delizonna," the union man claimed. "Anytime loyalty becomes the criteria to run a government agency, the agency can only suffer."

He fears the ALRB "will become just like all the other bureaucratic agencies."

There have been directives issued that indicate the ALRB operate like other state departments.

For instance, ALRB agents can no longer wear dungarees or bandanas when conducting farm labor elections. Growers have complained one can not tell the state people from the union people.

Also, the ALRB agents reportedly have been told not to work past 5 p.m. at the office.

A chain of events last week led grower and union spokesmen to believe that, as one grower source put it, "something strange is going on" at the ALRB El Centro office.

Pre-election documents were either misplaced or stolen from the agency's safe at its El Centro office.

Lopez said that "probably something was misplaced."

But ALRB agents told a grower representative Thursday the documents were stolen. The papers included a voter eligibility list for the J.A. Wood election that was to held Friday.

"They said the list was stolen and they wanted another one," said Ronald Hull, manager of the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association.

And, to the surprise of ALRB officials, Ganz of the UFW reported a "burglary" to the El Centro police Thursday.

Officer Kenneth Ramsay said he went to the state office to check out the report and was told by an ALRB employe that "the union doesn't want

the police to get involved."

Ganz later denied this.

Meanwhile, when Delizonna learned of the UFW leader's actions, he stated, "It strikes me as odd that Ganz would get involved in something that reportedly happened at a state office."

"Nothing was stolen," Delizonna added.

The morning after the "burglary," a reporter at the state office overheard an ALRB agent say to another, "Who else knows the combination?"

The night of the supposed heist, something else occurred.

Union and grower officials and farm workers showed up at the Security Pacific Bank in Brawley for a routine Wood's pre-election conference scheduled by the ALRB.

The ALRB agents who were supposed to conduct the meeting were the only persons who didn't show up.

An ALRB agent later confided that several of the agents stationed in El Centro were suddenly ordered to Sacramento by Delizonna.

What occurred at the Sacramento meeting is unclear, but Ganz described the El Centro office since then as being in a "purge atmosphere."

New agents were brought in from outside the Valley to handle the Wood election. It was held Friday and the UFW won.

The grower planned to file a formal objection to the election today with the ALRB.

It charges the ALRB agents with misconduct, primarily because of the "rush job," according to Ivan Allen, a labor relations consultant with the IVVGA.

"They held the election on the sidewalk right at the border."

Also, he had hoped that since the pre-election was not held until late Thursday afternoon, the election would be pushed back to Monday.

Under ALRB regulations, a pre-election conference must be held at least 24 hours before the polls open, Allen noted.

The Wood polls were open early Friday morning.

2/16/77

Imperial
Valley
Press

p 1

Feb. 16
1977
Imp.
Valley
Press