

ALRB, POLICE TARGETS

UFW supporters picket

By JOHN NUNES

Staff writer

About 40 United Farm Workers sympathizers Monday picketed the state Agricultural Labor Relations Board office and the police station in El Centro. They were planning a much larger demonstration today.

No arrests were made but there were reports of physical and verbal abuse. Police were called in about 6 p.m. to monitor the situation at the state office before demonstrators marched to the police station.

The UFW pickets were protesting the scheduled ALRB election of an estimated 200 employes of Royal Packing Co.

They demanded that Fred Lopez, director of the state office, sign a document that would throw out an election petition filed by Royal Packing employes group.

The employes group claims it is independent of the grower firm, but UFW charges that it is actually a company-backed union.

Lopez said he refused to sign. "I was prevented from leaving my desk," he said this morning.

"They were screaming and demanded

I sign. I told them they could file an objection to the election after the election was held. One of our agents was spit on."

Lopez also claimed that the demonstrators tried to overturn a state car that he and other ALRB employes later entered in an attempt to go to a pre-election meeting on the Royal Packing election. "They surrounded the car and began to rick it. We ended up walking to the meeting. They were all around us as we walked."

The pre-election conference was held at the El Centro Chamber of Commerce building, which is connected to the police station.

Shouting demonstrators filed into the police station lobby before they went into the meeting.

One grower source described the meeting as a "loud zoo." After 4 1/2 hours of debate the election was scheduled for Thursday. Polls will be at two locations — the U.S. Immigration Service office in Calexico and the government inspection station near the California-Arizona border.

The Winterhaven area polls are to accommodate Royal Packing laborers

working in nearby fields.

The farm workers will have four choices on the ballot — the employes group, the UFW, the Independent Union of Agricultural Workers (a Teamsters Union splinter group) and "no union."

The employes group, called the Agrupacion de Trabajadores Independientes en Royal Packing Co., is the second such group to attempt to organize its own union.

The first effort failed after the ALRB ruled that it was not a bona fide union.

The second effort is, however, being taken more seriously. It was, after all, allowed an election petition and now an election has been scheduled.

Royal Packing has been one of the more difficult ranches to organize. Both the Teamsters and UFW tried and failed in December and January.

A UFW spokesperson said this morning the union planned to have a thousand persons demonstrate at the ALRB office late today.

Florentino Olivas signed the election petition on behalf of the employes group. It was erroneously reported that Chavez did. Chavez, instead, signed as an employer's representative.

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