

Lettuce Workers Vote Despite UFW Challenge

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Workers for a major Imperial County lettuce processor voted Thursday in a union representation election protested by followers of Cesar Chavez at several state farm labor board offices.

Ballots still were being counted Thursday night at polling places where employes of Royal Packing Co. gathered to vote in Calexico, near the Mexican border, and Winterhaven, near Yuma.

The protests by Chavez' AFL-CIO United Farm Workers of America stem from a dispute over a California Agricultural Labor Relations Board decision to go ahead with the election despite Chavez' claims that the ALRB illegally agreed to allow a union dominated by Royal Packing officials on the ballot.

State law prohibits "company

unions" from taking part in an election to decide which union, if any, workers want to represent them.

Chavez joined about 80 of his supporters in a protest demonstration which began at the ALRB office in San Diego Wednesday, staying until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday's demonstration was a sit-in, but the approximately 75 demonstrators who returned Thursday remained outside, sometimes singing and chanting.

The demonstrators said Chavez, who was not present Thursday, probably went to the El Centro area where balloting also was scheduled.

Carlos Legrete, a spokesman for the protesters in San Diego, said sit-ins also were scheduled at ALRB offices in other areas of the state.

The demonstrations followed the
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Tuesday night arrest of Marshal Ganz, a top UFW official, and 27 other union members in El Centro after the group allegedly ripped paper from ALRB office typewriters, threatened staff employes and ignored police orders to leave.

The UFW maintains that a union on the ballot Thursday is the same one disqualified by the ALRB last December in an aborted election at Royal Packing.

But Harry Delizonna, general counsel of the ALRB, said in Sacramento that "the ALRB had three investigators plus Dennis Sullivan, chief of litigation, in El Centro and they determined there was no substantial evidence that this particular group of employes is being influenced by Royal Packing."

Delizonna maintained that he has not been given evidence to prove that the so-called "company union" which the ALRB disqualified last December is the same organization on Thursday's ballot.

The UFW was challenged in the Thursday election by the Independent Union of Royal Packing Co. Agricultural Workers.

Chavez said in San Diego that demonstrators went to the ALRB because "that is the only agency set up to deal with the people. They didn't answer us. They answered us by arresting us," he said "thousands of people are ready to be arrested and they will be political prisoners."

Delizonna said he took action to arrest the demonstrators in El Centro because "on Monday night they surrounded the car which contained five of our agents, rocked it, and then made them get out and walk to a preelection conference.

of typewriters and using telephones.

"We put up with that for 24 hours, but then had to do something. Anyone who says it was just a peaceful demonstration just wasn't there."

Delizonna also strongly denied that the ALRB refused to reply to the UFW contention that Royal Packing Co. Employes Assn. is a company-dominated union and that most of the people who make up the union are foremen.

Meanwhile, in Sacramento, employes of the ALRB itself announced they have formally completed the formation of a union of their own, to be called the ALRB Workers Union.