

UFW 24-hour vigil at ALRB still on

By JOHN NUNES

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The United Farm Workers "24-hour vigil" moved into its second day this morning in front of the state Agriculture Labor Relations Board (ALRB) office in El Centro.

Other offices in the state belonging to the agency were also being picketed today.

The demonstration, which began on Feb. 28 in El Centro, is labeled a "vigil for justice" by the Cesar Chavez union.

Several of the El Centro demonstrators began fasting Tuesday to dramatize the situation, according to Marshall Ganz, director of the UFW in Imperial Valley.

A Mass was scheduled at 6 p.m. today outside the ALRB office, Ganz reported.

Also, the demonstrators have begun to construct a Roman Catholic shrine in a pickup truck parked in front of the office, located at 582 State St., he added.

The UFW demonstration coincides with Lent, an annual Christian ritual observed during the 40 days prior to Easter. Fasting is a common self-imposed penance.

In San Diego, the UFW has moved in a television, a microwave oven, a refrigerator and cots inside the large ALRB office, Fred Lopez, El Centro ALRB director, reported this morning.

"They haven't been coming in our (El Centro) office," Lopez noted.

Lopez said the demonstrators have not come inside the El Centro office since last week, but a few minutes after a newsman arrived, 12 picketers "coincidentally" came in.

They crowded around Lopez, seated at a desk, and demanded to know why an election for employees of J.R. Norton had not been certified by the ALRB.

Until the election victory is certified, the victorious party, in this case the UFW, cannot negotiate a contract with Norton for its employees.

The UFW's first around-the-clock vigil that began Thursday night was abandoned about 2 a.m. the next morning.

Lopez explained earlier that the union protest has broadened to include other issues, such as the Norton election.

Originally, the demonstration was triggered by the ALRB allowing an employees group to take part in last week's Royal Packing Co. election.

The UFW claims it is a company union. The so-called

company union went on to win the election Thursday.

The demonstration spread throughout the state Wednesday after 28 UFW protestors were arrested at the El Centro office.

The UFW plans to file formal elections to objections to the Royal election today, Ganz said it lists 33 separate charges, primarily misconduct by ALRB agents.