Chavez and Teamsters Intensify Fight

By JON NORDHEIMER
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SALINAS, Calif., Sept. 7—The job of the cortadore, the man who cuts lettuce from its thick roots, is hard work, even for the young men with strong backs who toil in the broad green fields of the Salinas Valley.

Jose Morales knows this harvest work very well. He has labored in the lettuce fields of California and Arizona during harvests since 1962 when he and his brothers and sisters came here from Mexico.

This is the first lettuce crop in the Salinas Valley in 13 years that Mr. Morales will not help to pick. But he is in the fields every day, moving among the rows of workers, seeking a different harvest.

Mr. Morales, 37 years old, is campaigning for votes for the United Farm Workers of America in the decisive union elections that are being held this month in the Salinas Valley and other farm centers of central California.

New Law in Effect

California's unusual farm labor law, which went into effect the week before last, has thrown the entire collective-bargaining future of the state's 250,000 farm workers up for grabs. All existing labor contracts can be challenged if a majority of the workers on a farm petition for an election at harvest time.

The state's two principal farm labor representatives, the United Farm Workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, are now locked in a struggle in the central valleys of the state in dozens of union elections, a broad contest that will continue through the changing seasons as the harvest moves to other parts of the 800-mile-long state.

It is a debate carried into the fields and work camps of the laborers, a dialogue that holds the potential to give one union dominance in the future and banish the other.

"Listen," Mr. Morales said in Spanish the other day to a knot of cortadores who had moved far enough ahead of the packaging machines that follow them to take a break, "this election is everything that we have been working for. Everything will be different after we vote. Wages, working conditions, everything."

The men nodded their heads and smoked cigarettes. A few asked questions. "Are you sure the vote will be secret?" asked one man nervously.

"Yes, yes," Mr. Morales responded. "A secret ballot. It is the new law."

Both sides have opened propaganda campaigns that contain a dizzying amount of charges, and it is difficult in the short lifespan of a campaign—an election must be held within seven days after the filing of a petition—to ferret out scurrilous claims from legitimate ones.

The mood here is that the last-minute activity is of little value anyway. The whole farm Continued on Page 42, Column 1.
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A labor issue has been at an emotional and explosive drama for the last decade that it is felt that the pressure of individual workers was stifled a long time ago.

In the mind of Mr. Mora, an earnest and broad-shouldered man, the outcome of the election is obvious. "This is the first time that the workers in the Salinas Valley have a chance to vote for the union they want," he said after the cortadores returned to work in the field, bent over endless rows of lettuce, their sharp blades flashing. "In the past, the workers have got together and told the workers what kind of contract they would get."

While many outsiders might be conditioned to expect the U.F.W. to sweep most of the upcoming contests, because of the emotionalism that has surrounded the long and often bitter struggle by the union leadership to upgrade the entire range of life for Mexican-American farm workers, many workers have also been amazed by the men who have powerfully factored in the upcoming elections.

First, it is a strong national union with a membership of many thousands of workers that has always had the resources and leverage to push the pace of change, even if organization decided on its policies.

Second, the U.F.W. has always been organized to achieve the goals of its members. It has always been a union that has fought for the rights of its members, even if it meant going against the grain of the power structure. It has always been a union that has fought for the rights of its members, even if it meant going against the grain of the power structure.

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