

EMPLOYMENT 1/24/89 RP

# 500 new jobs



Chip Scheuer

Six food processors are part of program. Here, Richard A. Shaw employee Adela Hernandez sorts snow peas.

## Training program seeks year-round employment

By LARAMIE TREVINO  
STAFF WRITER

Five hundred new year-round jobs in Watsonville's frozen-food industry are the goal of a training program unveiled yesterday.

Run by the Industry Education Council of California in cooperation with six local food processors and the Teamsters Joint Council No. 7, the program will train and find jobs for 500 people currently receiving unemployment insurance.

Recruited from local Employment Development Department offices, the workers will enjoy union wages, health care benefits and referrals to jobs in participating companies.

The workers will be people 18 years and older who have not been employed in the frozen-food industry in the past two years.

One by one, the industry leaders and politicians who introduced the Agricultural Training Center's program at its 225 Salinas Road location traced its roots in Watsonville's 18-month-long frozen-food industry strike that ended in March 1987.

"It was an educational process if nothing else," Chuck Mack, president of Teamsters Joint Council No. 7, said of the strike. "Changes have to be made — and we have to be a part of those changes."

Not only will the new pro-

About 250 people are expected to be hired by spring and the remainder by the end of the year, officials said.

The program, funded by California's Employment Training Panel, will cost \$1.9 million to run at full capac-

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'Seniority is sacred. We're not going to tangle with that.'

— Sergio Lopez  
Teamsters Local 912

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gram put people back to work, Mack said, "but it establishes a new relationship within this industry."

Training is scheduled to begin Feb. 6.

By the end of February or early March, the program will be in "full, full operation," said Joe Berney, the director of the new center.

He said the project, which was two years in the planning, is an example of opportunity, entrepreneurship and cooperation.

ity. When the 500 workers are identified and trained, this program will end, but officials have said they would then seek grants for other similar training programs.

Sergio Lopez, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 912, said the new program would not threaten frozen-food workers who already have seniority. Workers who have established seniority by working at least 30 days in the previous year would be

See JOBS page 2 ▶