

WCF WATSONVILLE RP 4/3/89

Workers ratify pacts with food companies

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

Workers at three major Watsonville frozen-food companies ratified contracts over the weekend, ending negotiations that began two-and-a-half months ago.

The three companies, vegetable packers Norcal-Crosetti Frozen Foods Inc. and Richard A. Shaw Inc., and fruit-packer Del Mar Foods, agreed to contracts calling for hourly wage increases totalling 70 cents over three years. The three firms employ a total of 1,700

workers at peak.

Line workers at the vegetable firms, who make \$6.05 an hour now, will get a 25-cent raise for the first year, 20 cents for the second year and 25 cents for the third. The second- and third-year raises will be split and given at six-month intervals. At Del Mar, the raises will go from the present \$6.10 to \$6.80 over three years, with no semi-annual splits in the raises.

Sergio Lopez, chief officer of Teamsters Local 912, Watsonville,

said the contracts were ratified after a "blitz" of talks. Del Mar and Shaw contracts were approved Saturday, and Norcal yesterday.

Negotiations with Shaw stalled last month when workers twice rejected offers from the company. Saturday, Shaw employees voted 118 to 21 to approve the company's latest offer. The new contract called for the same wages workers had rejected March 19, but had several additional non-monetary stipulations.

Norcal and Del Mar workers, who had not been presented with a contract proposal before this weekend, ratified the offers by five-to-one margins.

At a press conference this morning, a weary Lopez said the settlements "are good for the companies and good for the workers."

Lopez said all three companies agreed to delete a clause from the last contract that required a company to re-open negotiations if a competitor signed a contract for lower wages.

Lopez said deletion of the so-called "favored nations" clause means workers can be assured of what wages they'll be making over the next three years.

Seven years ago, Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co. negotiated a wage that was 40 cents less than its local competitors. That disparity was one of the reasons Watsonville Canning workers walked off the job in 1985. The strike ended 18 months later when the company went bankrupt and Norcal was formed to take its

place. Norcal later merged with Crosetti.

Jeff Shaw, president of Shaw's, said the favored nations clause was included in the previous contracts to ensure parity among the companies.

"What we want is parity. It's not there for us to pay less," he said.

Shaw said the company would feel more comfortable with the clause, but doesn't feel it will be an issue.

See CONTRACT page 2 ▶

The boy was booked at Juvenile Hall.

WCF WATSONVILLE RP 4/3/89

CONTRACT

▶ From page 1

"We feel the union will work to make sure parity exists," he said.

Shaw said the company is pleased with the settlement, adding that there was give and take on both sides.

The contracts call for the com-

panies to maintain health benefits, with a 10-percent cap on the company's cost in the second and third years.

Norcal management and workers agreed to a "mutual respect" clause calling for both sides to honor the rights of others. Shaw agreed to a similar, but less specifically worded agreement.