

Hispanic rights at issue

Reagan policies bring mixed reaction

by Peter Katel

Most leaders of U.S. Hispanic organizations are reacting with a combination of approval and anger at President Ronald Reagan's new initiatives toward Mexico. In the wake of Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo's May 8-9 visit to Washington, U.S. Hispanics are at once pleased with what appears to be a new and friendlier relationship between the two countries, and dismayed that the Administration's hand of friendship has yet to be extended to them.

Indeed, even as U.S.-Mexican relations are improving, Administration-Hispanic relations seem to be deteriorating, they indicate.

Hispanics, generally, have expressed strong disapproval of the new "guest worker" program proposed by the Administration and apparently, welcomed by Mexico. They are also angered over Administration-backed efforts to alter radically the Voting Rights Act. And they assail the Administration's near-total failure to appoint Hispanics to Federal posts, and the relative lack of consultation with Hispanic organizations.

Admittedly, says Pablo Sedillo, Secretary for Hispanic Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Mexican-Americans "don't have to offer what the Administration thinks, at least, that Mexico has to offer." He means oil.

But U.S. Hispanics do have votes -- lots of them. And in the 1980 Presidential election, they gave a record percentage of their votes to the Republican candidate. While Reagan won only 25 percent of the Hispanic vote in the five Southwestern states, that represented the highest percentage for a Republican in at least 20 years, according to the

Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project.

The Administration policies that please Mexico may very well alienate these Hispanic-American voters. For their interests are often at odds, as currently in the case of the proposed "guest worker" program.

Under the Administration's plan, which is expected to be presented to Congress in a few weeks, some 50,000 Mexican guest workers would be permitted to enter the United States legally each year to seek temporary employment. Unlike the widely criticized "baracero" program of 1942-64, this plan would not restrict the Mexican workers of agricultural labor.

The program, says Ruben Bonilla, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, would "drive a wedge between two peoples," as Mexican citizens willing to work for low wages push Mexican-Americans out of jobs.

Antonia Hernandez, of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, called the proposal "a form of legalized slavery." She added, "If this country needs workers, allow them to come in as legal resident aliens and not as a subclass." She fears there would be a tendency to identify Mexican-American citizens with this "subclass" and treat them both as a "commodity."

The Mexican workers would not only be exploited themselves, they would be used to depress wages and discourage labor organizing, said Raul Yzaguirre, president of the National Council of La Raza in Washington. While Mexican-Americans are "pleased" with the meeting between the two presidents, Yzaguirre said, "It is unfortunate that the one thing on which they are tangibly agreeing is harmful to us."

In contrast to the views of most

Hispanic leaders, former U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Director Lionel Castillo expresses "full support" for the guest worker proposal, noting that he had suggested a similar program under the Carter Administration.

"I have the minority perspective, admittedly," he said, "But if you talk with Chicano businessmen and community people instead of leaders, you'll find quite a bit of support."

No one suggests, however, that U.S. Hispanics will support another major Administration-supported initiative that will affect minorities -- the proposed changes to the Voting Rights Act, which includes requirements for bilingual ballots and similar measures in heavily non-English-speaking regions.

Parts of the Act are due to expire next year. President Reagan told Hispanic leaders in a February 5 meeting that he was inclined to support extension of the act only if the law were changed to apply to the entire nation. But "nationwide coverage" is a well-known code word for destroying the act, Hernandez claims.

The act was held constitutional on the grounds that the various parts of the country to which it applies have records of voter discrimination. Nationwide, there is no such record, and the entire act might be subject to a finding of unconstitutionality. Critics of the change also argue that national coverage would make the job of enforcement virtually impossible.

Hernandez and other Hispanic spokesmen have been meeting with the Justice Department as the Administration prepares its formal position on extension.

Extension of the act is "indispensable to the continued increase of Chicano (voter) turnout and participation," said Willie Velazquez,

executive director of the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project. Opponents of extension, he claims, are "directly working to limit Hispanic political participation and increased influence."

Bonilla, who personally endorsed Jimmy Carter, said the only Hispanics well-regarded by the White House are those who go "hat in hand" to endorse Reagan's economic policies. The barb was aimed at the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which endorsed Reagan in the election and supports the President's economic package. Hector Barreto of Kansas City, national president of the Chamber, expressed full support for Reagan's policies toward Hispanics, including the guest worker program. Mexican workers will be taking jobs that economically advancing Mexican-Americans are moving out of, he asserted.

Barreto has been favored with several meetings with President Reagan, including a luncheon meeting with the President and Lopez Portillo.

Barreto has expressed approval of the Administration's record on Hispanic appointments, also, noting that the posts of director of the Small Business Administration and the Minority Business Development Administration have gone to Hispanics.

But most Hispanic leaders expected far more in the way of Administration appointments. "When we met with the President" in February, said Pablo Sedillo, "He said there would be five to seven sub-cabinet appointments, which we took to mean under-secretary or at least assistant secretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development."

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Grenada expects U.S. invasion

Grenada, a small Caribbean Island with a Black, English-speaking population, has charged that the United States is planning and practicing an invasion of its soil in the near future.

Grenada recently celebrated the second anniversary of its successful revolution against its former ruler, Eric Gairy. Following the revolution the United States offered \$5,000 in foreign aid with the condition that the country would not accept aid from Cuba. Since Grenada refused it has been the target of propaganda against its essential tourist trade and of alleged CIA terrorism and sabotage.

Prime Minister Maurice Bishop charges that the extensive war maneuvers now taking place in the Caribbean are a precursor to an imminent invasion. Over 120,000 U.S. troops, 250 ships and 1,000 aircraft from 14 nations are participating in the maneuvers, from August 1st to October 15th, extending from the South Atlantic through the Caribbean to the Baltic Sea. "Operation Ocean Venture" is the largest West-

ern military exercise since World War II.

The Caribbean phase was conducted from August 9th to 21st, at Vieques Island and Salinas in Puerto Rico and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The first mock battle was targeted at an Eastern Caribbean island called "Amber and the Ambers." The Grenadian government believes this is an obvious reference to Grenada and its island wards Carriacou and Petit Martinique.

"Amber" is described as being influenced by "Country Red" (Cuba?) to export terrorism to various countries in the Caribbean Basin and to engage in various "anti-democratic activities." "Amber" is supposed to be supporting a guerilla movement of about 400 to 500 men in "Country Azure" (El Salvador?). "Country Azure" is supposed to have invited U.S. forces to neutralize the guerillas.

The practice invasion of "Amber" to rescue American citizens held hostage there began August 9th

with a parachute drop into Vieques of over 350 troops of the 75th Ranger Battalion, based in Fort Lewis. The troops flew non-stop from Norton Air Force Base, California, covering the same distance as from their base in Washington to Grenada. During the night, prior to the paratroopers arrival, an undisclosed number of combat troops especially trained for mountain combat were landed in the western mountains of Vieques. The parachute drop was followed by the landing of 1,000 marines in amphibious units and air assaults.

The battle was planned to last 17 days, while an unconventional underwater demolition team and other special forces -- "the guys that do the dirty tricks" according to Navy Captain Dale Luvey -- move to free the hostages held on "Amber Island."

After rescuing the hostages, Rear Admiral Robert P. McKenzie, coordinator of the project, said the U.S. troops would remain on the island until elections are called and "a re-

gime favorable to the way of life we espouse" is installed.

Justifying the need for the war games, McKenzie said, "What we have here is a political-military problem. When Carter created the Task Force, he did so for political reasons. Now we see that it fulfills one of the most valid military reasons," which is "the need to respond to the activities of Cuba and Castro." Also involved in the maneuvers were contingents from Great Britain and the Netherlands, which have colonies in the area.

Giving the Grenada charges added credibility is the fact that there is an area in the southern tip of Grenada called Amber, and it is near the international airport being built with the assistance of Cuba. The terrain clearly resembles that of Vieques.

The government of Grenada reports that it has received intelligence reports that either a mercenary invasion or direct military aggression will take place before November 1, 1981.

Visit OMSI

OMSI begins a new tradition September 20, with FUNBURST 81, a day of special events, foods, rides and exhibits. Though this is the second year for Funburst, it marks the first time that OMSI has had a free admission day for the entire spectrum of the public.

The idea behind Funburst is to give all communities in the Portland Vancouver area something special. And to provide it in such a way that admission price does not pose a problem.

Special exhibits and shows will range from helicopters to free laser light shows and special displays on solar energy. There will be kite flying sessions on the lawn just up the hill from OMSI. Foods and beverages will be readily available, and games will range from the perennial milk bottle toss to the inevitable dunk tank.

There will be plenty of special activities, wandering minstrels, face painters, caricature artists, etc. For more information on this special day, call OMSI's recorded information line (228-OMSI) or the business office (248-5900). FUNBURST 81, Sunday, Sept. 20, 11 am-6 pm.

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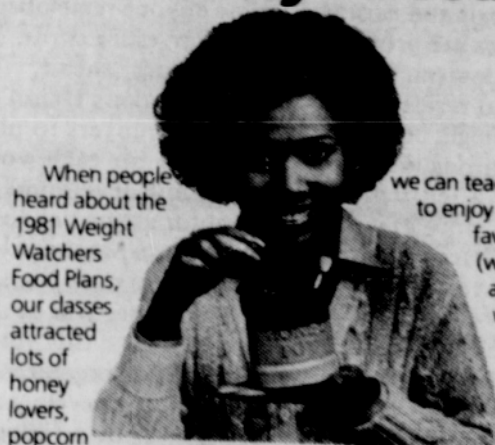
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When the ships come home: John Jones pauses to survey activities on Swan Island during recent

Port of Portland tour.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)