

Hatch faces M.B.E. counter suit

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — Another chapter has been added to the controversy surrounding R.A. Hatch Company vs. some Minority Business Enterprises (MBE's).

Nathan J. Proby, President of United Minority Workers, announced Friday, June 1, that he will circulate a petition demanding an audit of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) monies in Oregon.

"By July 1st, we will have a suit in Federal Court to get an injunction to give us time to get an account of all the money. We are looking at 200 million dollars and the question is where is our piece of the action? We are going to get it going and hold everyone responsible."

Proby said he will also question whether Hopping Construction should be allowed to continue working. In October, 1983, the

federal government said Hopping Construction did not maintain enough control over its business affairs to be certified as an MBE. "They should not be able to use any of that money," Proby added.

However, when Hopping was decertified as an MBE, there was no mention of the decertification being retroactive nor was anyone found negligent.

Proby indicted Bob Hatch for not keeping his word when he agreed to hire iron workers referred by him. "I sent three to his work site and his son hired them. But his foreman, who was Black, said they were not qualified. I told O.B. Hill about it, and he started dealing with it and ended up with a job."

Hill was also accused of disrupting Proby's meeting Friday, but Hill denied the allegation.

"I did not say anything and the problem was that the meeting was not well attended. I observed what was going on and it basically was a bunch of confusion."

Hill, president of CSS and

Associates, runs a counseling firm that is the go between for R.A. Hatch and MBE's in hiring and investigating complaints (*Portland Observer*, May 31st).

Hill said he has nothing but respect for Proby because Proby, "made it possible for me to do the little bit I'm doing for MBE's." And he added that if his complaint had validity, "I will make a recommendation to have that situation reconciled. But, he has yet to ask me to look into the charges."

Hill said some of Proby's assertion had merit. "There are all types of contractors not in compliance with the STAA and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). The prime contractors do not know where to look for qualified minorities to do the job. Instead of feeding on a frenzy over something that has already been decided, Proby should approach these contractors to help them get their shop in order."

The controversy continues. We'll keep you posted.

Religious freedom in Nicaragua

by Catherine Siegner

In the last of our series of interviews with Central American Information Week spokespersons, the *Observer* hears from the Rev. Tomas Tellez, executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua.

Rev. Tellez was in Portland, May 11, as part of a month-long speaking tour of the western U.S. sponsored by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization of New York and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Tomas Tellez

Rev. Tomas Tellez is executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua. He is a native Nicaraguan and lives in Masaja, about 1/2 hour from the capital of Managua.

Tellez is on a one-month tour of the U.S., speaking about conditions in Nicaragua and pleading with North Americans to pressure the U.S. government to stop aiding the contras. He was in Portland after addressing audiences in several Washington cities, where he received "a very positive response."

He said the contra attacks have killed at least 1,000 people so far. "The attacks on the border with Costa Rica and Honduras have killed tiny children; they have raped hundreds of women; burned schools and medical facilities. They have murdered physicians, including one French and one German physician. It is causing tremendous fear and panic in the country."

Tellez said the Nicaraguans fear the U.S. will invade "like the Marines in Grenada. It has been impossible, to date, for the contras because they have no support from the people of Nicaragua."

"If Reagan is re-elected, people feel the first thing he will do is invade. He will erase Nicaragua from Central America. The people of Nicaragua are prepared to die."

When asked why Nicaragua's form of government seems to be

such a priority item to the U.S. government, Tellez replied, "It means for Ronald Reagan a loss of power, control and wealth. Nicaragua is a 'bad example' to other countries. It means it is possible to change the legacy of poverty and malnutrition—to hope for a decent life out of control of Washington, D.C."

He said the changes in Nicaragua since the revolution in 1979 are "dramatic." Among the achievements have been the elimination of polio and other childhood diseases; decrease in the infant mortality rate from 25% to 12%; land reform programs that have benefitted 40,000 families, and a continual decrease in malnutrition, which he said reached 60% during the Somoza dictatorship.

Tellez said his organization has not been harassed by the Sandinista Government, even though Nicaragua is at least 80% Catholic. "We have more freedom now. (During Somoza) it was very dangerous to help people. It would be immediately pointed out as 'Communism.' Now we feel free to do this kind of work."

He was asked whether the Reagan Administration charge the Sandinista Government is Communist is true. "It depends on what you call Communism," he replied. "60% of our industry is private business. If this is Communism, then the government is Communist."

Tellez said many American firms are doing business in Nicaragua now, and "1,000 U.S. citizens are working in Nicaragua helping the government. Hundreds of young people are helping with the cotton and coffee harvests."

He summed up how he sees the future of his country. "Unless the American people do something to stop their own president from causing bloodshed in Nicaragua, I think Nicaragua will become a large cemetery. Only children and old people will remain."



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