

Duncan Continues To Lead Fight for Use of Mexican Farm Laborers

By YVONNE FRANKLIN
Mail Tribune
Washington Bureau

Washington - Rep. Robert Duncan warned the farmers of Oregon last week that they must "find alternative sources for obtaining labor from the American market" because of the defeat of the Mexican

Farm Labor law. Approximately 300 braceros are used yearly in Oregon to pick Rogue River Valley pears.

The rising opposition of church groups and labor unions was partially responsible for the demise of the bracero program, which aids one per cent of the farm group, mostly on large corporation farms in California and Texas.

However, Duncan, who serves on the Agriculture committee which reviews all farm legislation, believes the vote is "symbolic of the way farm legislation will be received this year."

Was this a result of the farm wheat referendum, he was asked?

"No," he said, "it's not a spirit of revenge at all. But there is a growing feeling against the agricultural subsidy program as being expensive and unsuccessful."

All of Oregon's delegation except Rep. Edith Green of Portland voted for a two-year extension of the law. An effort will be made to revive the bill, Duncan said, with amendments which may make it more palatable. Duncan had tried to amend the bill in committee to give workmen's compensation and provide adequate housing but was unsuccessful.

This bill, Public Law 78, which expires in December, 1963, admits Mexican male workers (braceros) for temporary employment. The Department of Labor recruits and places these workers, assists farmers and workers to establish contracts for work, and requires farmers to pay wages, transportation and provide adequate housing conditions.

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A farmer may not contract for Mexicans unless he has unsuccessfully offered domestic workers the same wages. He is not required to offer American workers equivalent workmen's compensation or occupational insurance coverage, housing or transportation expenses.

During debate last week both Duncan and Green took the floor to defend their positions. Duncan contended that he had noted the opposition of church and other groups and agreed that there was justification for "contentions that the use of Mexican workers has, to an extent, had an adverse effect on the employment opportunities of domestic workers."

"But there is also evidence," he continued, "that this total agricultural labor of the country cannot, at specific times and places, be met from domestic sources."

He reminded the non-farmers of the House that when perishable crops are ready, they must be picked. And he praised the efforts of Rogue River Valley farmers to obtain harvesting help before contracting for braceros. He also pointed with pride to the "advanced migratory labor legislation" in Oregon "to protect these people from exploitation, and to relieve them from the most pressing of the social problems with which they are faced."

"These laws include laws that license labor leaders, that impose strict standards of public health with which growers must comply," he continued, "safely regulations on the highways and get this—a pilot program to provide education for the children of these migrants who, because of the transitory nature of their parents' employment frequently reach adulthood without proper education."

Duncan was congratulated for Oregon's performance by an opponent who however reminded him that "this does not necessarily follow as far as the other states are concerned." A Texas congressman quoted wages as low as 20 cents an hour for domestic help being paid in Texas, squalid living conditions and discrimination against Mexican-Americans doing crop work.

Mrs. Green said "as a result of this program, poverty competes against poverty to produce more poverty." "This program, originally enacted in the 82nd Congress in 1951 as a temporary measure is a reason why the American farm workers, one of the poorest work groups in the United States, were able in calendar 1961 to earn an average of about \$880 a year for the 134 days of farm work they were able to obtain," she said.

"The program also hurts family farms, as the corporate farms are the principal employers of braceros, and are thus able to cut costs in a way not available to family farms who employ few hired workers."

The debate was carried by Californians and Texas, those with most to lose from the demise of the law. One Californian extolled the virtues of having braceros, saying they increased the fringe benefits to domestic workers and upgraded wages. However he was followed by another Californian who said: "As a health educator in the State of California, I did enter a bracero camp and found that their facilities were good. But then I crossed to the other side of the road and I found our own workers eating on the floor." "We were also asked if we had seen the health facilities made available to the braceros, and I say that I have. But I have also seen the type of health facilities that are made available to the Americans, which are, in effect, no facilities at all."

Statistics from the Agriculture Department for the past ten years were cited to show, if not a decrease, at least a plateau of wage rates in areas where braceros are used. For instance, wages for farm workers generally have risen from 83 cents to 1.05 cents an hour during the past ten years, but in bracero areas wages have held to around 80 cents an hour.

Duncan, when asked about this, said that if this was so it was the administrative responsibility of the Department of Agriculture who should see to it that domestic workers' wages are protected when braceros are brought in. When asked if recruitment programs for Americans shouldn't be strengthened, he

said we have them but the growers haven't made them work.



Franklin

Try and Stop Me

By BENNETT CERF

WHEN JOAN CRAWFORD and Bette Davis were co-starring in a motion picture, Miss Crawford playfully left this message in Miss Davis' dressing room: "Miss Davis

vows Joan Crawford is the best dramatic actress in the history of all Hollywood." Miss Davis sent the message back to Miss Crawford with just two commas added: "Bette Davis, vows Joan Crawford, is the best dramatic actress in the history of all Hollywood."

There is a well-remembered day when a playwright who stuttered sought to interest a big Hollywood tycoon in his new opus. After days of tapping his heels in an outer office, he finally was ushered into the great man's presence. "If you want to read your play while I'm shaving," he was told, "come on. You've got exactly eleven minutes."

The playwright, acutely aware of the impediment in his speech, despairingly began reading while the producer lathered his face. He had stammered halfway through Act One when the producer rushed from the bathroom to his office and began pressing buzzers. Yes-men appeared from nowhere. The great man waved his razor and announced, "This fellow has brought me a play with the most original gimmick in years. Every damn character in it stutters!"

"Stop telling me," begged Mr. Dough of his best customer, "that your wife always has the last word. You don't know how lucky you are. My wife never gets to it."

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COWS LIKE POLKA
Fort Atkinson, Wis. — (UPI) — Mrs. Carl Lange said she and her husband noticed a mild production slump during the two months their barn radio was broken. Mrs. Lange said production rose after it was fixed and added the cows seem to like a "good lively polka."

Government Sued In Ship Collision

San Francisco — (UPI) — A Japanese shipping company has filed a \$400,000 suit against the U. S. government in connection with a collision involving the freighter Kokoku Maru and an American military refrigerator ship. The suit, filed in federal court by Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha line, charged negligence on the part of the American vessel, the Military Sea Transport Service ship Asterion. A spokesman for the U. S. Justice Department said a counter suit against the Kokoku Maru's owners would be filed in U. S. District Court in San Francisco.

The Japanese company charged the Asterion was going at immoderate speed when the collision occurred Tuesday night in heavy fog about 35 miles northwest of San Francisco. The collision resulted in the death of one of the crewmen aboard the Kokoku Maru. The 43 other men abandoned their crippled vessel in the rough, foggy ocean whipped by 40 knot winds. They later were picked up.

Lee, Mass. — (UPI) — Clarence Dixon was fined \$100 in district court Thursday on charges of driving while under the influence of alcohol and drunkenness. Dixon, who pleaded innocent, and appealed the convictions, is an inspector for the state Alcoholic Beverages Control commission.

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