

Labor Director Questions Use Of Mexican Nationals

By ROBERT FAIRBANKS

SACRAMENTO (UPI) — Would an American citizen, generally accustomed to cars and bathtubs, work under a blazing sun for about \$1 an hour to pick tomatoes for instance?

And if he would not work for \$1, how much would he want to do stoop labor on farms?

Those questions underlie a current investigation into the Mexican national hiring program being conducted by the former state employment director, John E. Carr.

Carr, now finance director replacing Bert W. Levitt, began his investigation last January. As a result, he charged last week that members of the California Farm Placement Service have deliberately prevented domestic workers from getting farm jobs held by Mexican nationals.

Edward P. Hayes, chief of the Placement Service, has denied the same charges brought in the past by organized labor. Although he did not say that Carr was wrong, he did point out that "it's kind of difficult to take exception to the head man in your department."

Whether or not the charges are

justified, it still remains to be explained why a placement officer would do such a thing.

No one would deny that some growers prefer to use Mexican nationals. Nor would anyone deny that a grower might try to influence a placement officer.

Thus, a placement officer would be satisfying some growers by giving the Mexicans preference.

Many growers say they have good reason to prefer the Mexican braceros. They say the braceros are reliable in a business where so much else depends on chance that unreliable labor could ruin a farmer.

An acre of tomatoes, for instance, is worth nearly \$500 at the current price if it yields an average 20 tons. But a light shower could ruin the crop. If there's a cloud in the sky and the tomatoes are ripe, they must be picked.

Growers contend that the sort of domestic workers hired to do the picking often are unreliable. At best they are transients; at worst, drunks. A man can't do business with that sort of help, they say.

Organized labor takes a different view. Edward Williams, Stockton, president of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, (AFL-CIO), wants growers to pay wages that would attract reliable domestic workers.

For tomato pickers, he recommends that the prevailing rate be set at 18 cents a box. Since a good picker can average 10 boxes an hour, wages would immediately go above the highest rate now paid to Mexicans, \$1.25 an hour. It would be far above the lowest wage Mexicans receive, 70 cents an hour in Southern California counties.

Growers might answer that the price of tomatoes is too low for them to pay those wages. Williams replies in turn, "If tomato prices are low, it is because tomatoes have been overproduced. Fill tomato fields with domestic produced it is because cheap labor is available."

He adds that if reasonable wages were paid, his union could fill tomato fields with domestic workers after 30 days notice.

Although tomatoes are an example, the issues are not restricted to that crop. The number of Mexican nationals in California varies from a low of 24,000 in January to a high of 95,000 in September. They work on nearly every crop in the state.

Solon Backs Reform Bill

Senator Richard L. Neuberger said today that he was fully prepared to vote again for the Senate version of the Kennedy labor reform bill, which was passed by the upper chamber April 25.

The Senate measure, stronger than the version reported to the House by its Education and Labor Committee, has been assailed by labor unions as being too stringent and by management groups as being too weak.

"Labor reform is needed," Neuberger said, "and the Senate bill was a reasonable bill, despite the criticism made of it. I am willing to stand by the Bill of Rights for union members, and I think the Senate version is superior to that reported by the House committee, which removed all criminal penalties for violation of the Bill of Rights."

Neuberger declared that the goal of Congress had to be "that of eliminating corruption and tyranny in union affairs, without destroying the legitimate collective bargaining process which protects the living standards of union members."

Alma Sweetman, secretary and business agent of the local Culinary Alliance No. 424, was reelected last weekend as one of the four vice presidents of the Oregon State Culinary Alliance. Walter Lofgren, Astoria, was reelected president at the convention which was held at Seaside preceding the Oregon AFL-CIO meeting.

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Ambassador Resigns Post Rather Than Be Assassin

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP) — Nicaragua's former ambassador to Costa Rica says he quit his post because President Luis Somoza's government wanted him to arrange assassinations of Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica.

Dr. Leonte Herdocia, who also has represented his country at the United Nations and in El Salvador, said the Somoza regime has been waging a slander campaign against him since he resigned in March and joined other exiles seeking Somoza's overthrow.

Declaring himself a firm opponent of the Somoza family's rule, Herdocia told an interviewer the Nicaraguan government had tried to treat him like an insane person by claiming he had been under psychiatric treatment. Herdocia denied this.

After the rebel invasion of Nicaragua fizzled in June, Herdocia said the Nicaraguan government "distributed throughout the world the monstrous slander that 'Dr. Herdocia, acting as informer, had betrayed secrets of the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement.'"

"The Nicaraguan Foreign

Ministry was cynical enough to thank me," he said. "The Somozas thought that in this way they could provoke a tremendous reaction against me, and they did this for vengeance."

The campaign did not work, Herdocia said. He declared he had the confidence of Enrique Lacayo Farfan, Nicaraguan exile leader here, as well as the Nicaraguan opposition and public opinion in Costa Rica.

Lawmaker Tells Of Firing By GOP For Directory Use

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many a man has been fired from a job. But it's seldom you encounter someone willing to tell everybody about it.

Rep. Ken Hechler (D-WVa) is an exception.

In the biographical sketch he provided for the Congressional Directory, Hechler notes that he was a special assistant to former President Harry S. Truman from 1949 until Truman left the White House in January 1953.

Most politicians would be content to stop right there—especially in writing for the Congressional Directory where the practice is to mention only rosy things. But not Hechler. He adds he "remained at the White House under President Eisenhower but was fired in April, 1953, for the following stated cause: 'Completion of the work to which you were assigned.'"

As the above statement would indicate, Democrat Hechler is not at all abashed about discussing

his firing under the Republican administration.

"It was one of the most amusing experiences of my life," says Hechler, "especially since it took them so long to get around to firing me."

As Hechler relates it, he had no idea of staying on at the White House when Truman left — especially in view of the mass turnover that occurs when a president of another party takes over.

"But I liked my job, and I was working on a research project that I hadn't finished," Hechler recalls, "so I just continued going to work."

To his surprise, as Hechler puts it, no one said a thing. "I finished my project within a few days and assumed someone would soon give me the word that I was no longer needed. I

had no intention of being a Democratic Trojan horse or throwing sand in the gears. I just decided to sit it out and see how long I could last."

Almost immediately, he recalls, the White House personnel officer came around and suggested Hechler might be happier if he got a job outside the government. Hechler told him he loved working at the White House.

Several days later, Hechler said, the personnel officer told Hechler he would have to take a \$1,000 cut in his annual pay.

Hechler, who was making \$11,000 a year at the time, said he replied: "I would work here for nothing and will gladly sacrifice \$1,000."

"A few days later," Hechler said, "the personnel officer came back and said they would have to let me go and wouldn't I prefer quitting first so as to keep my record clean."

"I told him 'no,' that I preferred having it on my record, and if they were going to fire me

they had to give a reason. That must have stumped them, but they came back within a few days and gave me the reason—that I had completed my assignment.

"They didn't mention that I had completed it two months ago."

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