

**Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*,
New York: Harper & Row, 1981.**

Chapter 6: "Greasers Go Home"

The reaction of Anglo-Americans to Mexican migration to the United States has been one of "Greasers go home!"—an attitude fomented by the proximity of the border and the anxious feeling that millions of Mexicans are poised just across the border. Near panic was produced between 1910 and 1930 as Anglo-American nativists witnessed one of the largest mass movements of people in history with approximately one-eighth of Mexico's population shifting "north from Mexico." This movement occurred in a period of tremendous change which saw the demise of small farmers, a world war, the rise of radicalism, and recessions and depressions. As changes took place, Anglo-Americans grew more puzzled and frustrated and, not understanding what was happening, they blamed the destruction of their old ways on Mexicans.

Background of the Migration North of the Rio Bravo

The first U.S. industrial revolution spread to agriculture in the Southwest by the 1850s, with McCormick's machine reaping grain in fields that had once belonged to the Mexicans. Mining bonanzas attracted large numbers of Anglos. Railroad interests laid track linking East and West, greatly accelerating the development of the Southwest. The Southwest supplied raw materials for the East, which in turn provided the "colony" with manufactured goods and capital. Fuel and minerals were needed; as well as food to feed European immigrants who manned new factories. The refrigerated car went into service one year before transcontinental railroads were completed in 1869. Both railroads and refrigerated cars proved to be revolutionary in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Eastern and foreign capital gushed into the Southwest, monopolizing all sectors of the economy.

Large-scale development depended on large numbers of workers; to maximize profits, wages were kept as low as possible. What Anglo-American society wanted were workers who would do work white men would not, who would accept below-subsistence wages, and who would return home to their native lands when they finished their work. It was believed that Mexicans could supply this kind of labor at minimum expense and inconvenience.

Prior to 1880 contact between the United States and Mexico had been limited to the sparsely settled borderlands of northern Mexico. Although this area did not have sufficient manpower to supply the Southwest's growing labor demands, conditions in Mexico soon changed this situation and encouraged large numbers to migrate north of the Rio Bravo.¹

The roots of these conditions can be traced back through the history of Mexico. By the sixteenth century Mexico, one of the cradles of civilization, had reached a stage of advanced and complex social organization. Several cities reached populations of 100,000 or more and with such a large and increasing population technological changes and a more complex society with increased centralization, bureaucratic organization, division of labor, and widespread commerce promised to develop. By the 1520s 25 million inhabited central Mexico, and it can only be speculated as to what changes would have

¹ Max Sylvius Handman, "The Economic Reasons for Mexican Immigration," *American Journal of Sociology* 35 (January 1930): 601-611.

taken place if the Spanish invasion had not stopped the upward spiral of Mexico's growth.²

The northward movement was a natural process which began before the arrival of the Spaniards. Mesoamerica was continuously extending its sphere northward into the "Great Chichimeca." By the tenth century the Mesoamerican area of cultural influence included the southern half of Sinaloa, the rest of Jalisco, large western sections of present-day Aguascalientes and Zacatecas, and into Durango.³ In the Toltec Period (900–1200) the northern line extended from the Rio del Fuerte in Sinaloa to the Soto la Marina region in the Gulf of Mexico. Considering the growth of population in Mexico's interior, there is little doubt that the process of cultural, political, and economic integration would have continued if the Spaniards had not invaded the region. Population created a push both to the south and north.

The story of capitalism in Mexico begins with Spanish imperialism. However, the conquest retarded economic development, for by 1605 the Indian population of central Mexico dropped to 1,075,000, a condition which literally bled Mexico dry.⁴ The economic system imposed on what was then New Spain was not solely feudal, but mixed with the beginnings of capitalism. Feudal institutions were established in the southern part, while in other sectors mines, ranches, artisan workshops, small factories, and *haciendas* developed. Early in the colonial period the system of labor grants or allotments was phased out in industries like mining, with salaried workers dominating the work force.⁵ By the end of the colonial period it became evident that the Mexican economy had begun to stabilize, and by independence in 1821 there was a nucleus of merchants, mine owners, and professionals who wanted to follow the example of the United States and industrialize the country. A power struggle followed between these capitalists and the old elite—large landowners, the military, and the Catholic church. Capitalists won by the mid-1850s when Benito Juárez's liberal party finally took what proved to be full control of government. However, Mexico's economic growth had been severely destabilized by its extensive land losses to the United States, the Wars of Reform (1858–1861), and French intervention (1861–1867).

Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910) implemented a program of industrialization which accelerated the decline of feudalism in Mexico. Mexico's population increased slowly. In the 1840s the population was about 7,000,000. In 1875 it reached 9,495,000, in 1880 10,448,000, 1895 12,632,000, in 1900 13,607,000.⁶ By 1910 it had reached 15,160,000, still far below the 25,000,000 of the pre-conquest period. Meanwhile, the push north was revived, following the river bed rutted before the Spanish invasion.

The Díaz years produced tremendous changes in Mexico. "Economically, railroad building and industrialization were the most important innovative processes generating social change in Mexico during the Porfiriato."⁷ Both processes were financed to a large degree by foreign capital from the United States and European

² Enrique Semo, *Historia del Capitalismo en México: Los Orígenes, 1521-1763*, 5th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones ERA, 1976), p. 28; Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 87-89. In 1521 Mexico's population approached 30 million, making it larger than that of any European nation.

³ Ignacio Bernal, "The Cultural Roots of the Border: An Archaeologist's View," in Stanley R. Ross, ed., *Views Across the Border* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), pp. 26-27

⁴ Semo, pp. 15, 30

⁵ Semo, p. 146

⁶ Lawrence Anthony Cardoso, "Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1900-1930: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Causes" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1974), p. 23.

⁷ James D. Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 14.

countries. Between 1880 and 1910 15,000 miles of railroad were built, most lines running north and south, with short lines providing better access to mineral deposits and making growing of specialized crops such as sugar cane more profitable.⁸

Industrialization uprooted many *peones* either because mechanization displaced them from *haciendas* or because they were attracted to better paying jobs on railroad construction crews, in the booming mines of northern Mexico, or in the nascent urban industries. Before the twentieth century Mexican laborers had begun their northward migration to the mines of Coahuila and the smelters of Monterey. Pay in the north was 75¢ a day versus 25¢ a day in the interior.⁹ Peonage did not disappear since the new capitalist agriculturalists protected the institution to ensure a generous supply of cheap labor and resisted the loss of labor to other sectors.

New capitalists subverted the laws of the reform, especially *La Ley Lerdo*, which provided for the breakup of church holdings by specifying that corporations must sell excess lands. They distorted the law to give *hacendados* the right to encroach on *ejidos*, communal lands of Indian villages. As in the United States, the Mexican farm family was doomed:

Private property holders like the Zapata family lost their lands, as did the communal land holders (*ejidatarios*), to big commercial farmers interested in expanding the sugar industry in Morelos by developing large plantations with cheap labor and by constructing sugar mills on the plantations themselves.... Between 1876 and 1910, maize prices increased 108 percent, bean prices 163 percent, and chile prices 147 percent; since wages increased only 60 percent during the same period, real income for the masses declined an estimated 57 percent.¹⁰

Decline in purchasing power cannot altogether be blamed on the Diaz regime. Marked increase in population played a role. It increased the surplus labor pool which in part explains the static wages and rising food prices.¹¹ Not only railroads flowed south to north, but capital, which could have stabilized the Mexican economy, also went in that direction. Victor Alba, a Mexican historian, states that U.S. corporations owned three-quarters of mineral holdings in Mexico and that by 1910 "U.S. investment amounted to more than \$2 billion, more than all the capital in the hands of Mexicans."¹² According to Alba the Diaz government gave foreign investors preferential treatment. For example, Edward L. Doheny bought oil-yielding tracts in Tampico for \$1 an acre and companies exporting oil did not pay taxes.¹³ Furthermore, during labor disputes the Mexican government intervened on the side of management.

The interference of U.S. capitalists kept Mexico's economy destabilized, thus ensuring a constant supply of raw materials as well as cheap labor for their parent corporations in the Southwest. Monopolies, such as United States Steel, the Guggenheim, Anaconda, Standard Oil, and others were active in both countries, and the United States controlled the flow of migration. U.S. business interests built railroads that facilitated movement of Mexicans to the border areas, and in many instances they paid workers' fares to the United States, even when contract labor was in violation of U.S. law. Well before 1900 over 22,000 railroad cars transporting an estimated 77,000 Mexicans entered the United States.¹⁴

⁸ Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 216.

⁹ Cardoso, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰ Cockcroft, pp. 32, 46.

¹¹ Cockcroft, p. 46.

¹² Victor Alba, *The Mexicans* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 106.

¹³ Alba, p. 106.

¹⁴ Cardoso, pp. 57, 54; Alba, p. 106.

U.S. business policies also encouraged millions of others to flock to border cities, which became labor pools for both legal and illegal recruitment by agribusiness and large corporations. At the turn of the century most border cities numbered about a thousand inhabitants. Since then, growth of these cities has been phenomenal. For example, the population of Juarez was 10,621 in 1910, 48,881 in 1940, and 252,119 in 1960.¹⁵

Foreign domination of the Mexican economy cannot be attributed solely to the U.S. or the British and French investors who were also active. It took the collusion of Mexican capitalists to make foreign control possible. However, once the railroads were constructed, the United States outstripped all other interests:

Rail connections to seven land ports of entry into the United States and heavy U.S. investments in Mexico, all tended to divert the exports from Europe, which in 1877 took nearly 60 percent.... In 1877 the United States took 42 percent of the Mexican goods, and Great Britain, 35; by 1901 the northern neighbor absorbed 82 percent, and Great Britain, a meager 6.¹⁶

By 1910 foreign investors controlled 76 percent of all corporations, 95 percent of mining, 89 percent of industry, 100 percent of oil, and 96 percent of agriculture. The United States owned 38 percent of this investment, Britain 29 percent, and France 27 percent.¹⁷ Trade with the United States had jumped from \$7 million in 1860 to \$63 million in 1900.¹⁸ Anglo-Americans alone owned over \$100 million in the state of Chihuahua. In contrast, 97.1 percent of the families in Guanajuato were without land, 96.2 percent in Jalisco, 99.5 percent in Mexico (state), and 99.3 percent in Puebla.¹⁹

Given the population boom in Mexico and the flight of capital Mexicans did what people have always done—they followed the resources. Migration in search of food, clothing, and shelter is a basic behavior pattern which certainly predates the relatively re-cent concept of national borders. The policy of President Diaz toward the large exodus of Mexican citizens was one of indifference, for he placed little value on the *peon* and *cam pesino*. This was not the case with the Catholic church or *hacendados* in Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacan, both of whom complained that the country was being depopulated. In 1906 the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM) urged Diaz to repatriate Mexicans, to pay for their transportation and give them land. Three years later Francisco Madero called the flight of Mexicans to the United States a "serious national disease," but little could be done to stop the process.²⁰

The flight was encouraged by a series of economic developments in the United States, all of which increased the market for labor. Mining booms of the 1880s and 1890s, expansion of railroads, exclusion of the Chinese in 1882, the Dingley tariff on foreign sugar imports, growth of specialized farming requiring seasonal labor, and the Reclamation Act of 1902, which allowed the irrigation of large tracts of farm lands, all contributed to the pull of Mexicans northward. Mexican labor was the

¹⁵ Oscar J. Martinez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juarez Since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), p. 158. Also see Julian Samora, *Los Mojados* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 10.

¹⁶ Cumberland, p. 228.

¹⁷ Peter Baird and Ed McCaughan, "Labor and Imperialism in Mexico's Electrical Industry," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 6, no. 6 (September-October 1977):5.

¹⁸ Tomas Almaguer, "Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression: The Dialectics of Racial and Class Domination in North America," *Aztlan* (Spring & Fall, 1974): 40.

¹⁹ Cardoso, pp. 18, 57; Ed McCaughan and Peter Baird, "Harvest of Anger: Agro-Imperialism in Mexico's Northwest," *NACLA Latin America and Empire Re-port* 10, no. 6 (July-August 1976): 5

²⁰ Cardoso, p. 59.

commodity essential to making large profits in a system in which surplus labor became surplus capital. Officially 103,000 entered the United States by 1900, but that number may have been much higher. Officially 222,000 entered by 1910, but experts estimate that that number may have been as high as 500,000.²¹

In the first decade of the twentieth century Mexicans departed from their traditional areas of settlement. In 1908 Victor Clark stated: "As recently as 1900, immigrant Mexicans were seldom found more than one hundred miles from the border. Now they are working as unskilled laborers and as section hands as far east as Chicago and as far north as Iowa, Wyoming, and San Francisco."²² Incoming Mexicans settled permanently only in Texas; Clark estimated that prior to 1908 about 60,000 entered the United States annually, with most Mexicans remaining for only a brief period in the United States.²³

Lastly, the role of the railroads cannot be underestimated in this northward movement. It allowed the movement of large numbers of Mexicans from Mexico's interior across thousands of miles of desert and rugged terrain in northern Mexico.

Nativist Reaction to Mexican Migration

Victor S. Clark's *Mexican Labor in the United States*, a 1908 study by the U.S. government, dramatically documented the plight of Mexicans transported thousands of miles to the Southwest: "One is told of locked car doors and armed guards on the platform of trains to prevent desertion on route."²⁴ It records the exploitation of Mexicans in the United States and sets the tone for later stereotypes of the Mexicans, describing them as physically weak, irregular and indolent, their only virtues being that they were docile and worked for low wages.²⁵

Two years later the 1910 *Report of the Immigration Commission* continued Clark's view of Mexicans. It reported that they were the lowest paid of any laborers and that the majority worked as transient and migratory labor, did not settle, and returned to Mexico after only a few months.

²¹ Jorge A. Bustamante, "Mexican Immigration and the Social Relations of Capitalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1975), p. 50; Cardoso, p. 60.

²² Victor S. Clark, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, U.S. Department of Commerce Bulletin No. 78 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908).

²³ Gilbert Cardenas, "Public Data on Mexican Immigration into the United States: A Critical Evaluation," in W. Boyd Littrell and Gideon Sjoberg, eds., *Current Issues in Social Policy Research* (New York: Russell Sage, 1976), p. 2, states that data for 1820-1874 was collected by the Department of State from incoming ships; 1867-1895 statistics were gathered by Bureau of Statistics of the Treasury Department; 1899-1933 data by the Immigration Service of the Department of Labor; 1933-1941 figures by the Bureau of Immigration, and data for 1942 to the present by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice. Also see Larry Garcia y Griego, *Los Primeros Pasos al Norte: Mexican Migration to the United States* (Bachelor's thesis, Princeton University, 1973).

²⁴ Clark, p. 471.

²⁵ Clark, p. 496. Other recent works of interest have been compiled by Antonio Jose Rios-Bustamante, ed., *Immigration and Public Policy: Human Rights for Undocumented Workers and Their Families* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, University of California, 1977). Gilbert Cardenas of the University of Texas at Austin has also done solid research in the area of migration. His works include: "A Theoretical approach to the Sociology of Mexican Labor Migration" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1977); "Public Data on Mexican Immigration into the United States: A Critical Evaluation," in Littrell and Sjoberg, *Current Issues in Social Policy Research*, which deals with the limitations and abuses of data research by the INS; and "United States Immigration Policy Toward Mexico: A Historical Perspective," *Chicano Law Review* 2 (Summer 1975). Also see Gilbert Cardenas and Esteban Flores, "Political Economy of International Migration," prepared for the Joint Annual Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association and African Studies Association, Houston, Texas, November 1977.

The 1910 *Report* however warned that: "The assimilative qualities of the Mexicans are slight because of the backward educational facilities in their native land and a constitutional prejudice on the part of the peons toward school attendance. The report concluded that Mexicans regarded public relief as a "pension."²⁶

By 1909 Mexicans comprised 98 percent of the crews employed by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railways west of Albuquerque; the Southern Pacific Railroad employed a similar percentage.²⁷ As conditions in Mexico worsened as a result of the revolution, many middle- and upper-class Mexicans entered the United States. In 1913, primarily due to an economic depression, the commissioner sounded the alarm, indicating that Mexicans might become a public charge.²⁸ Newspapers created an anti-Mexican environment by making Mexicans scapegoats during times of depression. This is a pattern of repression that would be repeated throughout the twentieth century.

Capitalists welcomed Mexicans as temporary laborers, but not as residents. Only Mexicans who would do the work that white men would not were wanted, and then only when there was general prosperity. Nativists responded to events in Mexico and the activities of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* in the United States. On November 18, 1913 the Los Angeles police assigned several officers to investigate a plot by Mexican "reds" and *cholos*.²⁹ According to the *Los Angeles Times* at least 10 percent of Los Angeles's 35,000 Mexicans were "known to the police to be rabid sympathizers with the outlaw Villa."³⁰ With the advent of war in Europe business interests called for more Mexican labor and the "brown scare" intensified, with nativists now accusing all Mexicans of disloyalty. The Justice Department suspected German agents in Los Angeles of recruiting Mexicans as spies and saboteurs and they hired a former *Porfirista* to spy on the Mexican community. The degree of the hysteria was such that U.S. troops crossed the border into Mexico to attempt to capture Pancho Villa. Los Angeles officials talked about placing Mexicans in a "workhouse" or "isolation camp." Two days after Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico, the supervisors requested federal action in deporting *cholos* likely to become public charges.³¹ However, if conditions were bad in Los Angeles, they were worse in other sections of the country, especially in Texas (to be discussed in Chapter 10).

To a large extent the United States' entry into World War I relaxed efforts to control immigration. In 1916 the commissioner general of immigration commented that "The volume of refugees of a nonpolitical stripe has greatly increased. Fortunately for this, a general revival of industrial activity throughout the Southwest, and even in regions more remote from the border, has created a demand for unskilled labor."³²

In 1917 a substantial number of Mexicans returned to Mexico. The reasons varied. On May 18, 1917, draft laws had been passed and Mexicans were reluctant to be drafted into a foreign army. The cost of living had increased in the United States. Conditions had

²⁶ U.S. Congress, *Report of the Immigration Commission*, 61st Cong., 3rd Sess. (1910-1911), I:682-691, quoted in Job West Neal, "The Policy of the United States Toward Immigration from Mexico" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1941), pp. 58-59.

²⁷ Paul Shuster Taylor, "Some Aspects of Mexican Immigration," *Journal of Political Economy* 38 (October 1930): 610.

²⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, "Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration," *Report of the Department of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 337.

²⁹ Ricardo Romo, "Mexican Workers in the City: Los Angeles, 1915-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1975), p. 109

³⁰ Romo, p. 116.

³¹ Romo, pp. 122, 117-118.

³² U.S. Department of Labor, "Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration," *Report of the Department of Labor* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 397.

improved in Mexico and by the end of June nearly 10,000 Mexicans had returned to Mexico voluntarily. Moreover, the Mexican government feared the effects of the exodus of so many productive workers and began a campaign to entice them back.

Meanwhile, the war caused a labor shortage and the U.S. government actively worked to reverse this trend and Secretary of State Robert Lansing enlisted Catholic bishops to assure Mexicans that they would not be drafted.³³ This was not an easy task since, although the Immigration Act of 1917 was aimed primarily at Eastern Europeans, Mexicans were included in its literacy provision and were made subject to a head tax. Previous acts had excluded "contract laborers" and "persons likely to become a public charge." However, the wording was so broad and vague that employers and contractors who made large profits from importing labor ignored the laws. After 1917 the \$8 head tax was a major obstacle to poor Mexicans, who had no recourse but to remain in Mexico or enter the United States without documents. But, because a labor shortage threatened to cripple the war effort, industrialists and growers pressured the federal authorities to waive those sections of the immigration act that limited the free flow of Mexican labor. The commissioner of immigration affirmed that U.S. employers feared they might have to pay higher wages if Mexicans were excluded. Soon afterwards exemptions allowed illiterate contract workers from Mexico to enter the United States and the head tax was waived because of pressure from U.S. farmers who were in the "habit of relying to a considerable extent upon seasonal labor from Mexico."³⁴

Even though the United States was at war, border control by the military was conspicuously absent during this period. And while public policy encouraged Mexican labor to flow into the United States, local authorities and the public at large continued to discriminate against Mexicans. In 1917 the Los Angeles Police Department closely monitored the Fifth of May celebration after it heard rumors that radicals would be there. Three suspected members of the PLM were arrested and booked on the charge of attempting to incite a riot.³⁵ When war was declared on Germany, Los Angeles sheriffs spread hysteria by stating that Mexicans were preparing to join Germany in the conflict.

The Labor Department assured Congress that the exemptions and the open border were only "stop-gap" measures; they continued until the end of the 1921 fiscal year, when a surplus of labor developed in the United States. In the four years the exemptions were in force (1917 to 1921), 72,862 Mexicans entered the United States with documents, whereas hundreds of thousands crossed the border without documents.³⁶ The influx of undocumented workers continued as long as jobs in the United States were plentiful, and as long as the U.S. government looked the other way. By the 1920s Mexican migration was no longer limited to the Southwest, but began to spread into the Midwest.

The Restrictionist Movement of the 1920s

Opposition to Mexican immigration crystallized in the 1920s. Reaction toward Mexicans intensified as their numbers became larger. In Mexico road and rail transportation was no longer disrupted by the intense fighting of the revolution. Moreover, prices in Mexico rose 300 percent faster than wages. In 1920, a labor shortage in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Iowa, and Nebraska resulted in the heavy importation of Mexicans into those states.

³³ Cardoso, pp. 83-87.

³⁴ Quoted in Neal, p. 81.

³⁵ Romo, p. 119.

³⁶ Neal, p. 100. Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brows: Mexican Immigration in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 38, states that 34,922 Mexicans had returned to Mexico, 15,632 were still employed in 1921, 414 had died, and 21,400 had deserted and found other employment.

Industrialists imported Mexicans to work in the mills of Chicago—first as an army of reserve labor and then as strikebreakers. During the 1919-1920 and 1920-1921 seasons the Arizona Growers Association spent \$325,000 recruiting and transporting Mexicans to cotton areas.³⁷

Suddenly in early 1921 the bottom fell out of the economy and a depression caused heavy unemployment. If in times of prosperity their numbers had generated hostility, in time of crisis Mexicans became the scapegoats for the failure of the U.S. economy. The corporate interests which had recruited Mexicans felt little responsibility to them and thousands of Mexicans throughout the country were left stranded and destitute. In Arizona, although transportation fees had been deducted from the pay of Mexican workers, growers did not give them return passage. *El Universal* of Mexico City on March 5, 1921, reported: "When they arrived at Phoenix a party of Mexican workers were taken to Tempe and introduced to a concentration camp that looks like a dung-heap." According to this source the men were chained and put into work parties.³⁸ The situation was repeated in Kansas City, Chicago, and Colorado. In Fort Worth, Texas, 90 percent of 12,000 Mexicans were unemployed; whites threatened to burn out Mexicans and rid the city of "cheap Mexican Labor." Truckloads of Mexicans were escorted to Texas chain gangs. In Ranger, Texas, terrorists dragged a hundred Mexican men, women, and children from their tents and make-shift homes, beat them, and ordered them to clear out of town.³⁹ In Chicago employment of Mexicans shrank by two-thirds between 1920-1921. Police raids became frequent and vagrancy laws were strictly enforced. Conditions grew so bad that Mayor William Hall Thompson allocated funds to ship several hundred families back to the border. The *Denver Post* headlined "Denver Safety Is Menaced by 3,500 Starving Mexicans:"⁴⁰ Mexican workers from the Denver area were shipped to the border. Although these workers had been recruited to the United States, the U.S. government did little to ameliorate their sufferings. The Mexican government in contrast spent \$2.5 million to aid stranded Mexicans.⁴¹ Many workers would have starved if it had not been for Mexican President Alvaro Obregon.

Nativist* efforts to restrict the entry of southern and eastern Europeans bore fruit with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1921. Many wanted to include Mexicans in the provisions of the act, but Congress felt that the opposition of agribusiness to their inclusion might block passage of the bill. The 1921 act was generally considered too lenient. Nativists replaced it three years later with a permanent quota act that excluded most Asians and drastically cut the flow from southern and eastern Europe, identified as "racially inferior Europe." The act started a battle between the restrictionists, who wanted to keep the country "Anglo-American" and felt too many foreigners would subvert the "American way of life," and the capitalists, who set aside prejudices for low-cost labor, remembering that the 1917 act had hurt them financially. They opposed any restrictions on the free flow of Mexicans to the United States, especially since the supply of European labor was cut.

[*Nativism in the historical sense should not be confused with its anthropological use. Historically speaking it refers to anti-immigrant sentiments whereas in the anthropological sense it refers to a

³⁷ Cardoso, p. 97; Paul Morgan and Vince Mayer, "The Spanish Speaking Population of Utah: From 1900-to 1935" (Working Papers Toward a History of the Spanish-Speaking People of Utah, American West Center, Mexican-American Documentation Project, University of Utah, 1973), p. 39; Reisler, p. 39.

³⁸ Quoted in Herbert B. Peterson, "Twentieth-Century Search for Cibola: Post-World War I Mexican Labor Exploitation in Arizona," in Manuel P. Servin, ed., *An Awakening Minority: The Mexican-American*, 2nd ed. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1974), pp. 127-128.

³⁹ Reisler, pp. 50-51, 53.

⁴⁰ Mark Reisler, "Passing Through Our Egypt: Mexican Labor in the United States, 1900-1940 (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1973), pp. 84-85; Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brows*, p. 53.

⁴¹ Morgan and Meyer, p. 8.

"revival of indigenous culture, especially in opposition to acculturation." Native American party in this text refers to an ultranationalist group of Anglo-Americans who considered themselves the true Americans, excluding even the Indian. Moreover, in this text we loosely use the word Anglo to refer to white Americans which include Italians, Jews, and Slavs. As in the case of any rule, it has its exceptions.]

In 1923 the commissioner of immigration turned his attention more fully to Mexicans: "It is difficult, in fact impossible, to measure the illegal influx of Mexicans crossing the border."⁴² During the previous two years, there had been an economic depression in the United States, but by 1923, the economy had sufficiently recovered to entice Mexican workers again.⁴³ The increase continued into 1924, as the statistics on legal migration show:

1920	5,361	1923	63,768
1921	30,758	1924	89,336
1922	19,551		

SOURCE: Lawrence Anthony Cardoso, "Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1900—1930: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Causes" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1974), p. 60.

This "legal" migration was accompanied by an avalanche of undocumented workers who were encouraged to avoid the head tax as well as visa charges by U.S. employers and government authorities. The new migration differed from that of earlier years, becoming more permanent. Permanency and large numbers of Mexicans alarmed nativists, who deplored the fact that the Johnson Bill, which later became the Immigration Act of 1924, did not limit Mexicans. Debate over the issue of Mexican immigration was heated in both houses of Congress. The decision to exclude Mexicans from the quota was a matter of political opportunism. Albert Johnson of Washington, chairman of the House Immigration and Naturalization Committee and sponsor of the bill, bluntly stated that the Committee did not restrict the Mexicans because it did not want to hinder the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act.⁴⁴ Johnson promised that the committee would sponsor another bill to create a border patrol to enforce existing laws, and he claimed that a quota alone would not be effective. Representative John E. Raker of California seconded Johnson, and he saw no need for further legislation to restrict Mexicans. Raker felt that enforcement of existing laws would cut their numbers to 1,000 annually, by ending the employers' practice of paying the head tax for them and by excluding illiterates (according to Raker, "from 75 to 90 percent of all Mexicans in Mexico are illiterate").⁴⁵

Nativists were not convinced. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis called for a quota for the Western Hemisphere. He was alarmed that Mexican labor had infiltrated into U.S. industries such as iron and steel and arranged meetings with Samuel Gompers to plan a strategy to remove this "menace." Representative Martin Madden of Chicago, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, stated, "The bill opens the doors for perhaps the worst element that comes into the United States—the Mexican *peon*. . . . [It] opens the door wide and unrestricted to the most undesirable people who come under the flag."⁴⁶ Representative John O. Box of Jacksonville, Texas, a former Cherokee county judge and ordained Methodist minister, seconded Madden and demanded a 2 percent quota for Mexicans based on the 1890 population as well as additional funds for its enforcement.

⁴² U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1923), p. 16.

⁴³ Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brows*, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Neal, p. 106.

⁴⁵ Neal, pp. 107-108.

⁴⁶ Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brows*, pp. 66-69; quoted in Neal, p. 108.

Box supported an amendment to put only Mexico on a quota basis, exempting the rest of the nations in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁷ The Johnson bill, however, passed the House without the proposed amendment.

In the U.S. Senate, Frank B. Willis of Ohio echoed restrictionist sentiment: "Many of [them] . . . now coming in are, unfortunately, practically without education, and largely without experience in self-government, and in most cases not at all qualified for present citizenship or for assimilation into this country."⁴⁸ Senator Matthew M. Neeley of West Virginia charged: "On the basis of merit, Mexico is the last country we should grant a special favor or extend a peculiar privilege.... The immigrants from many of the countries of Europe have more in common with us than the Mexicanos have."⁴⁹

Anti-restrictionists continued to argue that it would be difficult to enforce such a quota, that Mexicans stayed only temporarily anyway, that they did work white men would not, and that an economic burden would result. However, the argument of Pan-Americanism proved to be the most effective. Many senators wanted to use the Pan-American union as a vehicle for establishing the political and economic dominance of the United States over Latin America. Senator Holm Bursum of New Mexico summed up the feeling of most senators, stating that he did not favor disrupting Pan-Americanism, that Mexico was sparsely populated anyway, and "So far as absorbing the Mexican population.... that is the merest rot. . . ."⁵⁰ In the end the economic interests supporting the Mexicans' entry won out.

In 1924 hostility to Mexican immigration continued across the country and restrictionists lobbied for the exclusion of Mexicans throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. Although border officials strictly applied the \$8 head tax, plus the \$10 visa fee, Mexicans still entered with and without documents. Johnson's committee, true to its promise, began hearings on the Mexican problem. Reports of the commissioner of immigration devoted more space to Mexicans. They stated that *peons* benefited from the reduction of European immigrants. In 1926 the commissioner wrote that 855,898 Mexicans entered with documents and predicted, "It is safe to say that over a million Mexicans are in the United States at the present time [including undocumented], and under present laws this number may be added to practically without limit."⁵¹

Discussion turned to the question of the Mexicans' race. The United States government listed incoming Mexicans as "white" in order to exempt them from race stipulations of the 1921 and 1924 quota acts. The public at large did not accept this classification. In Los Angeles a special census classified the Mexican as "red" and stated that 17 percent of Los Angeles school children belonged to the "red race" in 1927.⁵² Similar attitudes were common throughout the Southwest and Midwest.

An open fight broke out in Congress in 1926. Restrictionists introduced two bills. The bill proposed by John Box simply sought to apply quota provisions to the whole Western Hemisphere; the other bill, sponsored by Robert L. Bacon of New York, sought to apply them only to Mexico. The Box bill emerged as the main bill before the House. Western

⁴⁷ Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brows*, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Neal, p. 112.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Neal, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Neal, p. 117.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1926), p. 10.

⁵² Robin Fitzgerald Scott, "The Mexican-American in the Los Angeles Area, 1920-1950: From Acquiescence to Activity" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1971), p. 84.

representatives opposed any attempt to restrict Mexicans. S. Parker Frieselle of California stated:

We, gentlemen, are just as anxious as you are not to build the civilization of California or any other western district upon a Mexican foundation. We take him because there is nothing else available to us.⁵³

Representative John Nance Garner of Texas emphasized that Mexicans returned home after the picking seasons:

All they want is a month's labor in the United States, and that is enough to support them in Mexico for six months.... In our country they do not cause any trouble, unless they stay there a long time and become Americanized; but they are a docile people. They can be imposed on; the sheriff can go out and make them do anything.⁵⁴

Garner praised the contributions of Mexicans to his state. Both the restrictionists and the antirestrictionists displayed nativist and racist attitudes. The antirestrictionists wanted an open border because they wanted to exploit Mexicans for labor. Box candidly accused opponents of his bill of attempting to attract only the "floating Mexican *peons*" for the purpose of exploiting them, charging that "they are to be imported in trainloads and delivered to farmers who have contracted to grow beets for the sugar companies." Box stated, "They are objectionable as citizens and as residents."⁵⁵ During committee hearings, Box questioned a farmer as to whether what the farmer really wanted was a subservient class of Mexican workers "who do not want to own land, who can be directed by men in the upper stratum of society." The farmer answered, "I believe that is about it." Box then asked, "Now, do you believe that is good Americanism?" The farmer replied, "I think it is necessary Americanism to preserve Americanism."⁵⁶

Restrictionists could not muster sufficient power to push either the Box or the Bacon bill through Congress. The power of agribusiness and other industrial giants employing Mexicans blocked them. The role of these combines in fighting restrictionists is similar to the one they played in the debates over restricting Europeans. They warded off public opinion, which in both cases was anti-immigrant, but in this case their opposition was weaker. The restrictionist movement against Mexicans centered in the Southwest, which at that time had relatively little influence on national politics, whereas the nativist opposition to European immigration centered in the powerful eastern seaboard. Southwestern nativists attempted to ally with eastern restrictionist groups, but Mexicans were not as visible a threat in the nation's most populated centers. Without widespread national support southwestern restrictionists could not muster sufficient power to defeat agribusiness and the industrial giants.

In 1928 a congressional fight again loomed. The commissioner general of immigration recommended that natives of countries of the Western Hemisphere be brought within the quota provisions of existing law." The commissioner specifically recommended restriction of Mexicans, stating, "The unlimited flow of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere cannot be reconciled with the sharp curtailment of immigration from Europe."⁵⁷ A definite split developed between the Department of Labor, which favored putting Mexicans on a quota system, and the Department of State, which opposed it. The

⁵³ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico: Hearing No. 69.1.7 on H.R. 6741, H.R. 7559, H.R. 9036*, 69th Cong., 1st sess. (1926), p. 24.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, p. 190.

⁵⁵ U.S. Congress, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, p. 325.

⁵⁶ U.S. Congress, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 29.

State Department opposed placing Mexicans on the quota because it knew that such action would seriously weaken its negotiations with Latin America concerning economic trade treaties and privileges for Anglo-American interests. Anglo-American racism was a sensitive area. Placing Mexicans on a quota would be a legal affirmation of discrimination toward all Latin Americans. State Department officials were involved in sensitive negotiations with Mexican officials, who threatened to expropriate Anglo-American oil. The State Department, representing Anglo-American foreign investors and exporters, joined southwestern industrialists to kill restrictionist measures. They attempted to sidetrack debates, and for a time congressional debate centered around enforcement of existing immigration laws. Many congressmen were not satisfied and pushed for quantitative restrictions. Anglo-American labor supported the restrictionists, and questioned, "Do you want a mongrel population, consisting largely of Mexicans?"⁵⁸

The *Saturday Evening Post* ran a series of articles by Kenneth L. Roberts advocating that Mexicans be restricted. The author flatly prophesied that Mexicans would become public charges if their immigration were allowed to continue.⁵⁹ J. S. Stowell wrote in the *Journal of Current History*, "While certain interests have pleaded for the United States to invade Mexico, that country has unostentatiously accomplished an invasion of the United States, which is bound to have its effect on our future."⁶⁰

Growers and other industrialists joined forces with the Departments of State, Agriculture, and Interior and formed a solid front to overwhelm restrictionists, and immigration continued. Immigration statistics for the second part of the decade were:

1926	43,316
1927	67,721
1928	59,016
1929	40,154

SOURCE: Lawrence Anthony Cardoso, "Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1900-1930: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Causes" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1974), p. 60.

The decrease in immigration in 1929 was partially due to negotiations by the State Department in which Mexican officials agreed to limit the number of visas they would grant in return for an end to the agitation for restrictive legislation. The Department of Labor ignored this diplomatic coup. In 1929 the Commissioner General once more called for a quota. Congress made it a felony for an alien to enter the country illegally. The restrictionists would not compromise.

The Nativist Fever of the 1930s

The year 1929 began the Great Depression. Whereas the number of Mexicans entering the United States from 1925 to 1929 was 238,527, from 1930 to 1934 it fell to only 19,200. From 1935 to 1939 the number dropped even further to 8,737. The decline in Mexican immigration did not quiet restrictionists; they became more vocal. The House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization again held hearings in 1930. Debates were a replay of previous sessions. Agricultural and industrial interests again defended the Mexicans' "special standing" and again nativists opposed them. The Harris bill, one of the

⁵⁸ Quoted in Robert J. Lipshultz, "American Attitudes Toward Mexican Immigration, 1924-1952" (Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1962), p. 61.

⁵⁹ Kenneth L. Roberts, "West and Other Mexicans," *Saturday Evening Post* (February 4, 1928): 146.

⁶⁰ J. S. Stowell, "Danger of Unrestrained Mexican Immigration," *Journal of Current History* (August 1928): 763.

several bills introduced in 1930, advanced three new arguments for restriction: widespread unemployment, racial undesirability, and un-Americanism.⁶¹

The best example of overt racism can be found in a report prepared for John Box by Dr. Roy L. Garis of Vanderbilt University. Garis reported to the congressional committee as an authority on eugenics that "the following statement made to the author by an American who lives on the border seems to reflect the general sentiment of those who are deeply concerned with the future welfare of this country:

Their [the Mexicans'] minds run to nothing higher than animal functions - eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery. In every huddle of Mexican shacks one meets the same idleness, hordes of hungry dogs, and filthy children with faces plastered with flies, disease, lice, human filth, stench, promiscuous fornication, bastardy, lounging, apathetic peons and lazy squaws, beans and dried chili, liquor, general squalor, and envy and hatred of the gringo. These people sleep by day and prowl by night like coyotes, stealing anything they can get their hands on, no matter how useless to them it may be. Nothing left outside is safe unless padlocked or chained down. Yet there are Americans clamoring for more of this human swine to be brought over from Mexico.⁶²

Garis's American said that the only difference between Mexican women of the lower and higher classes was that high class Mexican women were just more "sneaky in adultery."⁶³

The Immigration Restriction League of New York asserted that Mexicans could not be assimilated into Anglo-American institutions. It charged, "It is ridiculous for us to limit European immigration and continue to admit Mexican *peon* labor."⁶⁴ It stated that Mexicans were not naturalizing and becoming citizens like other migrants.

In the Senate the Harris bill was placed on the calendar without scheduled hearings. If applied it would have reduced the number of Mexicans entering the country from 58,000 to 1,900.⁶⁵ It obviously discriminated against Mexicans, because it singled them out as the only group to be withdrawn from special status. Harris complained that Mexican immigration was especially offensive, since Mexico sent the largest number of undesirables to the United States. He cited unemployment among Anglo-Americans and made unsubstantiated statements to alarm listeners about the number of Mexicans entering the United States. For example, he claimed that "thousands and thousands" of Mexicans were "subject to charity" in the southwestern states, that a third of the children born in California were Mexicans, and that in a few years Mexicans would take over.⁶⁶ The Harris bill passed the Senate by voice vote of 51 to 16. On May 15 senators referred the bill to the House, where it was placed on the calendar.

Proponents of the bill maintained that Mexican migration had slowed only temporarily and that as soon as the economic situation bettered here or there was trouble in Mexico, Mexicans would return. Again, agricultural and industrial factions dwelt on the assertion that Mexican laborers were temporary residents:

⁶¹ Neal, p. 172.

⁶² U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration, H.R. 8523, H.R. 8530, H.R. 8702*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess. (1930), p. 436.

⁶³ U.S. Congress, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, p. 436.

⁶⁴ U.S. Congress, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, p. 394.

⁶⁵ Arnaldo de Leon, "The Rape of Tio Taco: Mexican Americans in Texas, 1930-1935," *Journal of Mexican American Studies* 1 (Fall 1970):5.

⁶⁶ Neal, p. 194.

The Mexican "peon" is an intense nationalist, but he is an individual nationalist. He has no real conception of a unified national consciousness. Nevertheless, the love of his native land is so strong that practically no Mexican "peon" enters the United States without expecting to return.⁶⁷

They also argued that, after all, the Mexican was preferable to the "Filipino or Puerto Rican."⁶⁸ By August of 1930 the House had still not taken action on the bill, but by that time the depression had cut the number of Mexicans entering the United States to a few hundred and the House saw no reason to pursue the issue.

If Mexican immigration had continued at the 1920 rate, restrictionist legislation probably would have passed, since even the champions of no quota would have grown nervous at having so many Mexicans living "next door." As it was, the Harris bill failed to pass the House, and for a time longer an immigration quota for Mexicans was averted.

The Deportation of the Chicanos

As long as business interests needed Mexicans as laborers, they defended their coming and employment. But in 1929 prosperity suddenly became a thing of the past, and white Americans, desperate for work, took jobs that once they had scorned. They displaced many Chicano laborers, and it was no longer necessary for business to defend their presence. Many *Mexicanos* displaced from farms migrated to the cities hoping to find work or to obtain money through relief programs. Anglo-Americans, concerned about unemployment and the growing cost of welfare, adopted a "take care of our own" attitude. They resented using funds to aid the "brown men" in their midst who, after all, did not qualify to be "Americans"; they blamed foreigners for the unemployment and felt that they should return to their homeland. Local authorities decided that money could be saved by shipping Mexicans home, a plan that appealed to many Anglo-American taxpayers. Between the years 1931 and 1934 thousands of Chicanos, many of them U.S. citizens, were sent back to Mexico. Official U.S. records put the number at around 300,000, but the figure may well have reached a half million.⁶⁹ In all about one-third of those counted in the 1930 census were repatriated, about 60 percent of whom were children who had been born in the United States and thus were citizens. Meanwhile, the Mexican government viewed the return of Chicanos favorably.⁷⁰ Most Anglo-American officials attempted to emphasize the "voluntary" nature of repatriation in contrast to deportation, or forcible expulsion from the country. To Chicanos, however, the term *repatriation* became synonymous with deportation and most Chicano experts agree that the line differentiating the two is very thin.

⁶⁷ James Hoffman Batten, "New Features of Mexican Immigration" (Address before the National Conference of Social Work, Boston, June 9, 1930), p. 960. The author was the executive director of the Inter-American Federation of Claremont, California.

⁶⁸ Batten, p. 960.

⁶⁹ Materials on the Mexican repatriation of the 1930s are still scarce. Works that have been useful include Ronald W. Lopez, "Los Repatriados" (Seminar paper, History Department, University of California at Los Angeles, 1968); Gregory Ochoa, "Some Aspects of the Repatriation of Mexican Aliens in Los Angeles County, 1931-1938" (seminar paper, History Department, San Fernando Valley State College, 1966); the Clements Collection, Special Collections Library, University of California at Los Angeles; and Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974). Peter Neal Kirstein, "Anglo over Bracero: A History of the Mexican Worker in the United States from Roosevelt to Nixon" (Ph.D. dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1973), states that the repatriation retarded the urbanization of Mexicans in the United States. Kirstein also discusses agribusiness's active campaign to protect its Mexican labor pool.

⁷⁰ Neil Betten and Raymond A. Mohl, "From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, During the Great Depression," in Norris Hundley, ed., *The Chicano* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio, 1975); Hoffman, p. 95; Emory S. Bogardus, "Repatriation and Readjustment," in Manual P. Servin, ed., *The Mexican-Americans: An Awakening Minority* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1970), p. 89.

President Herbert Hoover encouraged the "send-the-Mexican-back-to-Mexico" movement when after three years of depression he settled on the so-called foreigner as one of many excuses for failure of the U.S. economy. The foreign worker became a favorite scapegoat, especially the "illegal" aliens, which to most meant Mexicans. All the ingredients were operative for a major outbreak of nativism: crisis, fear, racial antipathy, and a group highly visible because of its large numbers on which to blame the breakdown of the system.

U.S. consuls restricted the number of visas issued and strictly enforced the terms of the Immigration Act of 1924 which excluded those "likely to become a public charge." Secretary of Labor William N. Doak stated, "My conviction is that by strict limitation and a wise selection of immigration, we can make America stronger in every way, hastening the day when our population shall be more homogeneous."⁷¹

On January 6, 1931, Doak requested that Congress appropriate funds for the deportation of illegals from the United States. He alleged that an investigation revealed that 400,000 aliens had evaded immigration laws and that at least a fourth of these illegals were readily deportable. "Doak's immigration agents raided both public and private places seeking aliens who were deportable, and they did so in a search which extended from New York to Los Angeles."⁷² The California senate considered a bill to prohibit "illegal aliens from engaging in business or seeking employment, and making it a misdemeanor to have such an alien as a partner."⁷³ Antiforeign sentiment reached its zenith during this period of insecurity.

Local authorities throughout the Southwest and the Midwest emulated the actions of the chief executive; they went one step further and devised a program to encourage even documented immigrants to return to Mexico. They seized on Doak's statements, newspapers drummed the "take care of our own" theme, and they manufactured an enemy. Los Angeles papers ran articles with titles such as "U.S. and City Join in Drive on L.A. Aliens." They played up alleged Mexican crime, sensationalizing themes of shootings, fights, and rapes. They also applied the label "alien" to all Mexicans.⁷⁴

On January 6, 1931, C. P. Visel, the Los Angeles local coordinator for unemployment relief, urgently requested guidance in a wire to Washington, D.C.:

We note press notices this morning, figure four hundred thousand deportable aliens United States. Stop. Estimate five percent in this district. Stop. We can pick them all up through police and sheriff channels. Stop. United States Department of Emigration incapacitated to handle. Stop. You advise please as to method of getting rid. Stop. We need their jobs for needy citizens.⁷⁵

Visel circulated leaflets in the Chicano community stating that deportations would include all Mexicans, legal or illegal. He admitted that he wanted to intimidate illegals and force them to abandon the Los Angeles areas. Concerned over loss of Mexican labor, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce criticized his actions and warned him that the Mexican community would misunderstand the "wholesale raids"; Visel did not moderate his attacks and issued press releases advertising arrests of Mexicans. Visel advertised that "20,000 deportable aliens were in the Los Angeles area." So blatant were the raids that the normally apathetic Chicano businessmen protested the treatment of nationals to

⁷¹ Quoted in Lopez, p. 51.

⁷² Abraham Hoffman, "Stimulus to Repatriation: The 1931 Federal Deportation Drive and the Los Angeles Mexican Community," in Norris Hundley, ed., *The Chicano* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio, 1975), p. 110.

⁷³ Lopez, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, pp. 52, 55.

⁷⁵ Lopez, p. 55.

authorities both in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City.⁷⁶ The protests did not dissuade immigration authorities. On the 26th of February at 3 P.M., aided by a dozen police, they surrounded the Los Angeles plaza, detained over four hundred people for over an hour, and arrested eleven Mexicans and five Chinese. They released nine of the Mexicans the next day. In the next months authorities rounded up 3,000 to 4,000 Mexicans and held them without benefit of counsel. The effect of the raids on the Mexican community were traumatic and they often resulted in the separation of entire families. In this hostile environment authorities asked Mexicans if they wanted to return to Mexico. "Faced with poverty, discrimination, and uncertainty as to their status, many Mexican families seriously considered the idea of repatriation."⁷⁷

City officials, along with national and state officials, planned its strategy. The Mexican government approved and cooperated with the repatriation and guaranteed transportation from the border to the repatriate's colony. Mexican authorities encouraged Mexican governors and labor unions to welcome repatriates, and the government promised land and other benefits. Mexican officials cooperated with the program not because they approved of the motives of the U.S. officials, but because Mexico had lost an estimated one-eighth of its population to the United States.⁷⁸ Mexican revolutionaries, such as the artist Diego Rivera, urged Mexicans to return home. In Detroit Rivera helped found the League of Workers and Peasants of Mexico. The Mexican government, however, did not have the resources to provide for mass repatriation or to absorb such large numbers of workers and their families. Economically, Mexico still suffered from the chaos of the Revolution of 1910, and it had difficulty providing for citizens in Mexico, let alone for those who lived in the United States. As a consequence, the repatriates became disillusioned with the program.

Local officials continued to devise programs to encourage Mexicans to return home. In California charity organizations and the California Department of Unemployment cooperated. When a Chicano approached these agencies for assistance, a case worker called on the family and attempted to persuade them they would be happier in Mexico. If a Chicano agreed to return, fare and subsistence to the border were paid for the entire family. In many instances local authorities used the Mexican consul to help "persuade" the welfare recipient to return.

Generally, fathers wanted to leave, since they had never intended to stay permanently, but the children had roots here, were U.S. citizens, and desired to remain. Some teen-age children bitterly resented being uprooted. The mother was caught between her husband and her children. When the client hesitated, the welfare or case worker became more persuasive.⁷⁹

Just how persuasive officials were is open to conjecture, since local authorities always maintained that returns were voluntary. However, two leading authorities on the Chicano in the 1930s contradict local authorities' interpretation of "voluntary." Professor Norman D. Humphreys of Detroit wrote:

Even the families of naturalized citizens were urged to repatriate, and the rights of American-born children to citizenship in their native land were explicitly denied or not taken into account. The case

⁷⁶ Lopez, p. 58; Hoffman, "Stimulus to Repatriation," pp. 113, 116, 118.

⁷⁷ Hoffman, "Stimulus to Repatriation," pp. 120, 122; Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, p. 84. A more detailed commentary on Visel's plan, entitled "DEPARABLE (sic) Aliens: Visel's Plan," is found in the Clement Papers. It was hoped that an army of aliens would walk out after the first publicity out of fright, that aliens in Los Angeles would become "deportable conscious," that actual deportations would follow, and that jobs would become available.

⁷⁸ Lopez, p. 43.

⁷⁹ Bogardus, pp. 92-93.

workers themselves brought pressures to bear in the form of threats of deportation, stoppage of relief (wholly or in part, e.g., in matters of rent, or by means of trampling on customary procedures).⁸⁰

Repatriation was severe in the Midwest where thousands of Mexicans had been recruited to work in the railroads, packinghouses, and steel mills. A disproportionate number of Mexicans were deported from Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. The number of Mexicans had increased in the Gary-Chicago area to over 20,000 by 1930. Newspapers there began a campaign to discredit the Mexicans and by the mid-1930s job discrimination and exclusion from federal projects convinced many Mexicans to return to *la tierra del sol* (the land of the sun).⁸¹

Michigan officials admitted that some Mexicans left involuntarily with some even jumping the train to evade "repatriation." A medical doctor was put on the train because some of the repatriates had been removed from the hospitals to be shipped south. Tales of hardships are told of programs in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Fort Huron, Saginaw, Flint, Blissfield, and Mt. Pleasant.⁸²

Lorraine Esterly Pierce states that in St. Paul, Minnesota, over 300 out of a population of some 1,500 were deported. In Chicago the 1930 census had reported 20,000 Mexicans, but the number declined to 16,000 by 1940.⁸³

Social workers used subtle measures to persuade the prospective repatriates. In Detroit they placed Mexican families on a "cafeteria list," forcing them to eat at a local mess hall. There they were fed unfamiliar foods such as sauerkraut instead of traditional beans. Case workers continually harped that Mexicans would be much healthier in Mexico. In some cases officials made overt threats that rent would not be paid or that welfare payments would be cut. Deceit surrounded the whole affair. Authorities in most cases promised that those who chose to leave could return to the United States when they wanted; however, exit cards were stamped charity cases, which automatically excluded them from reentry. "The average Mexican family repatriated had four children, all or most of whom were American citizens by birthright."⁸⁴ Most experts agree that the authorities violated the Mexicans' rights.

The repatriation program was basically a "money-saving device." Enthusiasm for the program lessened as local authorities learned that funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) could no longer be used for the transportation of repatriates. For example, in the first three years of the Los Angeles program, 1931 to 1934, the county shipped 12,668 Chicanos back to Mexico at a cost of \$181,228, whereas from 1935 to 1938 it shipped only 3,560 at a cost of \$160,781.⁸⁵

Officials kept accounts to be sure their programs continued to yield a savings. Carey McWilliams underscored the dollars-and-cents approach: "It cost the County of Los Angeles \$77,249.29 to repatriate one train load, but the savings in relief amounted to

⁸⁰ Norman D. Humphrey, "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan: Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," *Social Service Review* (September 1941): 505.

⁸¹ Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, p. 120; Betten and Mohl, pp. 125, 138, 139.

⁸² George Kiser and David Silverman, "The Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression," *Journal of Mexican American History* 3 (1973): 153.

⁸³ Lorraine Esterly Pierce, "Mexican Americans on St. Paul's Lower West Side," *Journal of Mexican American History* 4, no. 4 (1974): 3; Louise Alm Nuevo Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970: (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1976), pp. i-ii, 69-77.

⁸⁴ Ochoa, p. 66.

⁸⁵ Ochoa, pp. 65-66.

\$347,468.41" - a net savings of \$270,219.12.⁸⁶ In the last analysis President Coolidge's maxim - "the business of America is business" - was applicable, and repatriation proved profitable, at least in dollars and cents.

Human Rights for Whom?

Besides forced repatriations, mass roundups, and newspaper hysteria, Mexicans became victims of government and public violence. Labor became the primary targets of vicious assaults and red-baiting (to be discussed in the following chapter) and denial of civil liberties to individual members of the oppressed class was also common.

The case of Jesus Pallares is typical.⁸⁷ Pallares was deported on June 29, 1936, as an undesirable alien. He had emigrated from Mexico as a teenager and was 39 years old at the time of deportation. He had fought in the revolutionary ranks and was a skilled miner and a talented musician. In the United States Jesus had been a dedicated union man. In 1923 he opposed the anarchist faction at Dawson, New Mexico. In 1930 at the Gallup-American Coal Company, a subsidiary of the Guggenheim interests, he was fired for complaining about working conditions.

Jesus, his wife, and their three children moved to Madrid, New Mexico, a company town. The company paid workers in scrip that could be used only at its store. It owned all the houses and charged workers \$3 a month for coal, for which they had to pay whether they needed it or not. Workers had to contribute to an employee's fund that the company managed, yet they were not given an accounting of funds. In the summer of 1933 the company made wholesale layoffs. Pressure mounted for management to comply with provisions of the National Industrial Relations Act (NIRA), which specified in section 7(a) that employees had the right to unionize. The company circumvented the requirement and established its own company union. Jesus joined the union, but when he realized that it did not represent the workers, he resigned.

Dissident workers established their own union and smuggled an organizer into town. Elected local union representative, Jesus attempted to open negotiations. He failed, so the union appealed to the federal government for hearings conducted under the NIRA code. The hearings were a farce; the chairman of the hearings was pro-management. Paid cronies of the company attended and interrupted the workers' testimony. Hearings did not advance the cause of workers, and the union had no alternative but to strike - a maneuver that failed.

The NIRA code specified that a man could not be fired for union activities. Nevertheless, the company harassed Jesus until he left. They transferred him to a mine that had been exhausted. An experienced miner, he knew that he could not earn a living wage there, since he was paid for piecework. Company officials red-baited Jesus, calling him a communist agitator. When he could not pay his rent, the company evicted him, even though his wife was expecting a baby at any time. Jesus tried to enter his home and was charged with "forcible entry." He then appealed to federal officials, but they ignored him. Blacklisted and unable to find employment as a miner, Jesus and his family moved to Santa Fe where, for the first time, he went on relief.

⁸⁶ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 193; Robert N. McLean, "Good-bye Vincente," *Survey* (May 1931). McLean p. 195, states that the Southern Pacific fixed "charity Mexican fares" in repatriation. Arnoll to Matson, June 4, 1931, in the Clements Papers, indicates that the Chamber of Commerce feared that repatriation would cause problems in Mexico, driving trade and services to the British.

⁸⁷ This section draws heavily on Philip Stevenson, "Deporting Jesus," *The Nation* 143 (July 18, 1936): 67-69.

In 1934 Jesus became an organizer for *La Liga Obrera de Habla Espanola*, which concerned itself with the problems of the poor Chicanos. Membership was small at first, but by February 1935 it had grown to 8,000. To deal with organizations like *La Liga*, the Democratic state legislature made syndicalism a felony, punishable by fourteen years' imprisonment. The law specified that it was illegal to be seen with an issue of *The Nation* magazine or any other printed material that advocated "any change in industrial ownership." *La Liga* assembled 700 pickets and entered the senate galleries protesting the law. Members of the senate changed their votes, infuriating big business interests.

Jesus was the best recognized leader and local authorities pressured immigration officers to deport him. On April 23, 1935, he was jailed. After three weeks N. D. Collear, a federal immigration inspector, who served as initiator, investigator, prosecutor, judge, jury, and even interpreter, conducted a secret hearing. Governor Clyde Tingley asked Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins to expedite Jesus's deportation on the grounds that *La Liga* was a communist organization. After the hearings Jesus was released on \$1,000 bond. Esther Cohen; of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Program in New Mexico, stated that there were repeated attempts to intimidate Jesus; officials threatened to take his relief away and "starve his family." The outcome of the hearing was predictable. Although the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt was considered progressive, big business, especially mining, still ruled the state of New Mexico and had considerable influence on the U.S. government. Jesus Pallares was deported.⁸⁸

The Bureau of Immigration was involved in numerous labor conflicts during the 1930s, constantly arresting and deporting strike leaders, and acted in concert with "patriotic groups" such as the American Legion to root out un-Americans. The nation's press continued their anti-alien policy (particularly the *Chicago Tribune*, the Hearst chain, and the *Saturday Evening Post*).⁸⁹ Not until the war effort of the 1940s bettered economic conditions and created a shortage of labor did public policy toward *Mexicanos* change.

The Pharaohs Rent their Braceros

World War II created a labor shortage in the United States. Many Chicanos volunteered for the armed forces and the government drafted them in large numbers. Chicano farm workers joined many other migrants to the cities where they obtained jobs that had previously been closed to them and where employers paid them much higher wages.⁹⁰ The farm labor shortage became more acute when federal authorities placed Japanese-Americans in concentration camps. Japanese included small farmers as well as farm workers. With the United States requiring food not only for domestic consumption, but for its allies as well, maximum farm production was vital to the war effort. Once more, U.S. growers turned to Mexico. They had two alternatives: simply open the border and allow Mexican workers to come into the United States unencumbered or enter into an agreement with Mexico for an agreed upon number of Mexican *braceros* (helping arms). Growers preferred the first alternative, since they could hire the unencumbered Mexicans at the lowest possible wage. The Mexican government, however, would not permit this and insisted on a contract that protected the rights of its workers.⁹¹

⁸⁸ D. H. Dinwoodie, "Deportation: The Immigration Service and the Chicano Labor Movement in the 1930s," in Antonio Jose Rios Bustamante, ed., *Immigration and Public Policy: Human Rights for Undocumented Workers and Their Families* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, 1977), p. 165, states that Pallares' fellow organizer in *La Liga*, Julio Herrera, had been de-ported the previous year, charged with illegal entry in 1908.

⁸⁹ Dinwoodie, pp. 163–174.

⁹⁰ George O. Coalson, *The Development of the Migratory Farm Labor System in Texas: 1900–1954* (San Francisco: R & E Research Assoc., 1977), p. 67, states that in March 1943 the Bureau of Agricultural Economics reported a loss of 2.8 million agricultural workers since 1939, 40 percent to the armed forces and 60 percent to war industries, and that between April 1940 and January 1942 an estimated 280,000 workers left the farms for the armed forces.

⁹¹ Juan Ramon Garcia, "Operation Wetback: 1954" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1977), pp. 16–17.

Mexico was not enthusiastic about sending large numbers of workers to the United States, but U.S. authorities pressured it to consent. The two governments entered into a preliminary agreement in 1942, called the Emergency Labor Program, under which both would supervise the recruitment of *braceros*.⁹²

They agreed to a contract guaranteeing the workers' rights. The contract provided, among other things, that Mexican workers would not displace domestic workers, they would be exempted from military service, and discrimination would not be tolerated. It also regulated transportation, housing, and wages of the *braceros*. Under this agreement about 220,000 *braceros* were imported into the United States from 1942 to 1947. The first were admitted into El Paso, Texas, on September 27, 1942.⁹³

At first many farmers opposed the *bracero* agreement, preferring the World War I arrangement when they recruited directly in Mexico with no government interference. They resented any form of government regulation. Texas growers in particular wanted the government to open the border. Only a handful of U.S. growers participated during the first year. States like Texas had always had all the "illegals" they needed, and wanted to continue to control their "free market." They did not want the federal government to regulate the Mexicans' wages and housing. Growers especially disliked the \$3.00 an hour minimum wage, charging that this was the first step in federal farm-labor legislation. Texas growers, thus boycotted the program in 1942 and moved to circumvent the agreement.⁹⁴

The executive branch of the U.S. government did not receive congressional approval for the *bracero* program until 1943, when Congress passed Public Law 45. This act put the government in the role of labor contractor and began the "administered migration" of Mexicans into the United States.⁹⁵ The initial contract placed administration of the program under the Farm Security Administration. "The growers' primary concern was crops; the FSA was concerned about those who worked the crops."⁹⁶ One year later, because of grower pressure, the *bracero* program was transferred to the War Food Administration.⁹⁷

As a result of lobbying by the powerful American Farm Bureau Federation, an escape clause had been written into the act. Under this clause, found in section 5(g), the commissioner of immigration was empowered to lift the statutory limitations of the act on the condition that such an action was vital to the war effort. Almost immediately farmers pressured the commissioner to use the escape clause; he acceded, and the border was unilaterally left open and unregulated (an amazing action considering that the United States was at total war).

Mexicans flooded into border areas where farmers employed them without worrying about federal regulations. The United States had breached its agreement, and the Mexican government objected. In Washington some officials bluntly advocated disregarding Mexico's complaints. In the face of pressure, Mexican authorities agreed to allow workers who had entered outside the contract agreement to remain for one year, but made

⁹² Cardenas, "United States Immigration Policy," p. 75.

⁹³ Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: McNally & Loftin, 1964), p. 47; Garcia, p. 23.

⁹⁴ Richard B. Craig, *The Bracero Program* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 198; O. M. Scruggs, "Texas and The Bracero Program," *Pacific Historical Review* (August 1962): 251-252.

⁹⁵ Cardenas and Flores, p. 14.

⁹⁶ Kirstein, p. 39.

⁹⁷ Coalson, p. 94.

it clear that they would not tolerate uncontrolled migration in the future and that if farmers wanted a steady supply of labor, they would have to adhere to the bilateral agreement.

In the summer of 1943 Texas growers finally asked for *braceros*, but the Mexican government refused to issue permits for Texas-bound temporary workers. They considered intolerable the Anglo-Texans' extreme racism and brutal transgressions against Mexican workers. Governor Coke Stevenson in an attempt to placate the Mexican government induced the Texas legislature to pass the so-called Caucasian Race Resolution, which affirmed the rights of all Caucasians to equal treatment within Texas. Since most Texans did not consider Mexicans Caucasians, the law had no relevance. Governor Stevenson attempted to ameliorate tensions by publicly condemning racism. The Mexican government seemed on the verge of relenting when further racist incidents were reported from Texas. On September 4, 1943, Stevenson established the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas, financed by federal funds, supposedly to end discrimination toward Chicanos through better understanding. The Mexican government did not change its position forcing Texas growers to finish the season without Mexican labor.⁹⁸

Not all *braceros* worked on farms; by August 1945, 67,704 *braceros* were working on U.S. railroads. The work was in general physically oppressive and often hazardous. There are several recorded cases of death resulting from accidents on the railroads, sunstroke, heat prostration, and the like. Abuses of the contract agreement were frequent. Many *braceros* were not paid and many had to make involuntary payments from their wages to employers, as in the case of workers for the New York Central who had to pay \$1.50 per day for food whether they ate or not.⁹⁹

Braceros had other complaints such as unsafe transportation, unsanitary toilets, sub-standard living quarters, and lack of heat in winter months. Some growers worked the *braceros* for 12 hours while paying them only for 8. *Braceros* did not take it lying down. For example, in December 1943 they struck the Southern Pacific at Live Oaks, California, over the dismissals of Anastacio B. Cortes and Manuel M. Rivas.¹⁰⁰

From 1943 to 1947 the Mexican government refused Texas's requests since there was no evidence of any decline in its racist actions. Nevertheless, Texas growers continued to press for *braceros*. In October 1947 the Mexican government finally agreed to issue permits to Texas.

Although labor shortages ceased after the war; the *bracero* program continued. The U.S. government functioned as a labor contractor at taxpayers' expense, assuring nativists that workers would return to Mexico after they finished picking the crops. Growers did not have to worry about labor disputes. The *braceros* were used to glut the labor market to depress wages and were also used as strike-breakers. The U.S. government fully cooperated with growers, allocating insufficient funds to the border patrol, insuring a constant supply of undocumented laborers.

When negotiations to renew the contract began, Mexico did not have the leverage it had during the war. It had become dependent on the money brought back by the workers. The United States, now in a stronger negotiating position because it was no longer limited by

⁹⁸ Scruggs, pp. 253-254.

⁹⁹ Kirstein, pp. 83-84, 90-91.

¹⁰⁰ Henry P. Anderson, *The Bracero Program in California* (Berkeley: School Public Health, University of California, July 1961), p. 146; Kirstein, pp. 94-95.

the critical wartime labor shortage, could pressure Mexico to continue the program on U.S. terms. The 1947 agreement allowed U.S. growers to recruit their own workers and did not require direct U.S. government involvement. The Mexican government had wanted recruitment in the interior and more guarantees for its citizens, but it got few of its demands.¹⁰¹ Growers were permitted to hire undocumented workers and certify them on the spot. This procedure along with recruitment at the border produced a magnetlike effect.

In October 1948 Mexican officials finally took a hard line, refusing to sign *bracero* contracts if workers were not paid \$3.00 per hundred pounds for picked cotton rather than the \$2.00 offered by Anglo-Americans. The Mexican government was also still concerned about racism in Texas and still wanted recruitment from the interior rather than at the border as was then the case. Border recruitment created hardships on border towns with workers frequently traveling thousands of miles only to be left there unselected. (Border towns have grown over 1000 percent since 1920 and unemployment remains extremely high; they serve as employment centers for Anglo-American industry.) The surge of workers to the area gave an advantage to the United States, for Mexico might be forced into signing *bracero* contracts to relieve the problems it created.

As the 1948 harvest approached, Anglo-American growers grew concerned and in response to their pressure Grover C. Willmoth, district director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at El Paso, Texas, instructed his inspectors to open the border.¹⁰² When U.S. officials removed the physical barriers, the thousands of desperate Mexican workers at Juarez naturally crossed over to U.S. territory. Immediately the INS placed them under technical arrest (for illegal entry) and then paroled them to the U.S. Employment Service, which distributed them to employers and labor agents. Willmoth defended his actions by alleging that Mexican officials had broken the *bracero* agreement and were black-mailing the United States by demanding a wage guarantee of \$3.00 a hundred before the workers would be allowed to cross. Another U.S. official complained that "These Mexicans were pointing a pistol at the American farmer's head. It was an outright breach of the labor agreement."¹⁰³ Willmoth felt he summed up the situation when he said, "they need the work, our farmers need them and the crops were going to waste."¹⁰⁴

The act of opening the border effectively destroyed Mexico's negotiating position. It could only accept official "regrets" and continue negotiations.¹⁰⁵ A new agreement was reached which reaffirmed the growers' right to recruit *braceros* directly on either side of the border. The agreement failed to provide any substantial protection for the workers. Between 1947 and 1949 alone 142,000 undocumented workers were certified, whereas only 74,600 *braceros* were hired by contract from Mexico.

The Truman administration supported the farmers. On a whistle-stop tour in October 1948, Truman was told by El Paso farm agents, sugar company officials, and immigration agents of their problem with Mexico. Shortly after he left, Mexican workers were allowed to pour across the bridge into the United States with or without Mexico's approval. Farmers waited with trucks and the Great Western Sugar Company

¹⁰¹ Craig, p. 54. Mexico, during the 1940s, asked for the protection of *brace* since it vividly remembered the repatriation of the 1930s when the U States literally dumped and stranded thousands of Mexicans at the horde Garcia, p. 92.

¹⁰² Coalson, p. 82; J. B. Jones, "Mexican-American Labor Problems in Texan (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1965), p. 23.

¹⁰³ Hart Stillwell, "The Wetback Tide," *Common Ground* (Summer 1949): 3-4.

¹⁰⁴ Kirstein, p. 147.

¹⁰⁵ Craig, pp. 58-59.

representative had a special train waiting. "Though there were some exceptions, the 'wetbacks'* were employed mainly by small growers. It was from these United States farmers that President Truman received support in his upset election in 1948."¹⁰⁶

[*"Wetback" is a pejorative name applied to undocumented workers, referring to the act of swimming across the Rio Grande to avoid the border patrol.]

Under the Republican administration of the 1950s farmers had increasingly more to say about the administration of programs, while the Mexican government had fewer choices. In 1951 Public Law 78 renewed the *bracero* agreement putting the federal government back into the employment business. PL 78 went a long way in institutionalizing the *bracero* program.¹⁰⁷

In 1953 negotiations began anew for a renewal of the *bracero* program. An impasse resulted when U.S. negotiators refused to 'make any concession to Mexico's demands for better wages. To force Mexico's hand the departments of State, Justice, and Labor agreed to open the border until the wage issue was resolved. They issued a press release on January 15, 1954, that as of the 18th the U.S. would act unilaterally.¹⁰⁸

According to another source, "From January 23 to February 5, a series of bloody clashes and riots between Mexican guards and aspiring *braceros* erupted at several cities along the border."¹⁰⁹ Short of shooting its own citizens, Mexico could not prevent the workers from crossing the line. Mexico, had no other choice but to sign a contract favorable to the United States.

An administration spokesman displayed the arrogance of power: "They [the Mexican Government] want to set the wages. We [the U.S.] are going to set them. We'll give them the right of appeal if they think they are too low."¹¹⁰ This arrogance was underscored when Congress passed legislation authorizing unilateral recruitment at the border.

Actions of Anglo-American authorities were a flagrant violation of international law which caused bitter resentment in Latin America at the United States' use of the "big stick" and Mexico's obvious humiliation.¹¹¹ Opening the border ended the labor shortage, and, 'thereby served notice to Mexico that it had better negotiate because the United States had the power to get all the workers from Mexico it wanted - agreement or no agreement. It was evident that the United States would act unilaterally and that it completely controlled the *bracero* program. In fact many congressmen suggested that they abandon the *bracero* program and just open the border.¹¹² Growers protected the *bracero* program because of its stability. At government expense they could have all the workers they wanted without having to worry about collective bargaining. In California *braceros* were used for "tomatoes, lettuce, strawberries, sugar beets, lemons, melons, asparagus, miscellaneous vegetables, grapes, and cotton in that order."¹¹³ In other crops

¹⁰⁶ Nelson Gage Copp, "Wetbacks and Braceros: Mexican Migrant Laborers and an American Immigration Policy, 1930-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1963), pp. 156, 189.

¹⁰⁷ Craig, p. 36

¹⁰⁸ Galarza, p. 66.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Craig, p. 112; also covered in Howard Lloyd Campbell, "Bracero Migration and the Mexican Economy, 1951-1964" (Ph.D. dissertation, The American University, 1972), pp. 69-71.

¹¹⁰ Patricia Morgan, *Shame of a Nation* (Los Angeles Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, September 1954), p. 28.

¹¹¹ Craig, p. 119.

¹¹² Craig, pp. 104, 107, 109. Craig, p. 107, states that Mexico did not believe that the United States would be so arrogant and its national pride had not permitted it to back down during the negotiations.

¹¹³ Ray Gilmore and Gladys W. Gilmore, "Braceros in California," *Pacific Historical Review* (August 1962): 272.

domestic labor supplemented *braceros*. Increased dependence of Anglo-American growers on the *bracero is* reflected in the figures on *braceros* entering the United States under contract;

1942	4,203	1950	67,500	1958	432,857
1943	52,098	1951	192,000	1959	437,643
1944	62,170	1952	197,000	1960	315,846
1945	49,454	1953	201,388	1961	291,429
1946	32,043	1954	309,033	1962	194,978
1947	19,632	1955	398,650	1963	186,865
1948	35,345	1956	445,197	1964	177,736
1949	107,000	1957	436,049		

SOURCE: Leo Grebler et al., *Mexican-Mexican People: Nation's Second Largest Minority* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 68.

The decline in the 1960s marks a convergence of several factors working against the program: resentment of the Mexican government, grievances of the *braceros*, increased opposition by domestic labor, and, probably most important, changes in agricultural labor-saving techniques and the U.S. economy.

The *bracero* program "proved nationalistically humiliating" to Mexico; "The [Mexican government] did not have the power to end racial and religious discrimination; Mexicans performed the most menial work; and even many of Mexico's skilled workers bribed officials for the 'privilege' of becoming a temporary migrant."¹¹⁴

Through the work of Dr. Ernesto Galarza, both Mexican authorities and U.S. politicians became aware that the status of the *bracero* resembled that of a prisoner of war, herded to and from work. Workers had many grievances; they especially resented paying \$1.75 (in 1955) for meals consisting of mainly beans and tortillas when they earned \$3.00 for a 10-hour day. Growers recovered a good part of their wage outlay through the company store and in some camps by acting as pimps. According to a physician, the *bracero*, after he was used, was just dumped across the border to fend for himself.¹¹⁵

The 1950s saw a tremendous change in agriculture. From 1949 to 1965 the total U.S. population increased some 45 million, while the farm population dropped almost 12 million; in 1949 the farm population was 16.3 percent of the total, but in 1963 it dropped to 6.4 percent. The number of farms declined from 9,640,000 to 5,610,000. During the same period the number of migrants rose from 422,000 to 466,000.¹¹⁶ This increase, however, did not occur in areas of agriculture heavily dependent on *braceros*. Mechanization of large farm operations in crops in which *braceros* were used actually lessened demand:

In 1950, approximately 8 percent of United States cotton was machine harvested. By 1964, the final year of the *bracero* contracting, the figure had risen to 78 percent. In Arizona and California, two principal *bracero*-using states, 97 percent of the 1964 cotton crop was machine harvested.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Garcia, p. 29, states that opponents of the *bracero* program were amazed that "foreigners" were repeatedly guaranteed fringe benefits that had been repeatedly denied U.S. citizens in the migrant stream. Craig, p. 68, makes the point that Mexico had not been happy during the 1948-1951 period. See also Craig, pp. 22-23.

¹¹⁵ Copp, pp. 107, 109; Anderson, p. 39.

¹¹⁶ Craig, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Craig, p. 11.

The principal justification for the *bracero* program was that farmers could not find sufficient domestic labor and that without the *braceros* their crops would rot. However, the *bracero* users gradually were deprived "of one of their principal arguments in behalf of *bracero* importation."¹¹⁸ The unemployment caused by the 1958 recession intensified domestic labor's opposition to the *bracero* program.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the executive branch and Congress moved towards a pro-labor position. Politicians slowly extended many of the guarantees that the *braceros* enjoyed to domestic farm workers and began to monitor programs making sure that prevailing wages, housing, and working conditions were adhered to. All these factors contributed to the demise of the *bracero* program on December 31, 1964.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Craig, p. 182. Campbell, pp. 5-6, 101, is an interesting study of the decline of the dependence on the *bracero* in the 1960s as the result of mechanization, particularly in cotton.

¹¹⁹ Copp, p. 102.

¹²⁰ Ernesto Galarza, *Tragedy at Chualar: El Crucero de las Treinta y dos Cruces* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: McNally & Loftin, 1977). The book describes the death of 32 *braceros* while being transported in a hazardous bus on September 18, 1963. The American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, *Our Badge of Infamy, A Petition to the United Nations on the Treatment of the Mexican Immigrant* (April 1959), reviews the excesses of the program. On page 24 it tells of the decapitation of a *bracero* driving a tractor by a low-flying airplane on May 28, 1958. The Justice Department investigation took 24 hours. Ralph Guzman's editorial in the *Eastside Sun*, March 4, 1954, is a good review of the literature up to that time and the exploitation of *braceros*. Guzman states that Truman's Committee on Migratory Labor confirmed the influence of agribusiness on the INS.