

**Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers
to the United States, 1942-1964:
Antecedents, Operation and Legacy**

THE IMPORTATION OF MEXICAN CONTRACT LABORERS
TO THE UNITED STATES, 1942 - 1964:
ANTECEDENTS, OPERATION AND LEGACY

by

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THE IMPORTATION OF MEXICAN CONTRACT LABORERS
TO THE UNITED STATES, 1942-1965
ANTECEDENTS, OPERATION AND LEGACY*

The bracero program, also known as the Mexican contract labor program, was a mechanism by which Mexicans were sent to work in certain agricultural areas of the United States under a series of bilateral agreements with Mexico which spanned two decades. It began as an emergency program to satisfy the agricultural manpower shortages created by the Second World War in 1942; by the time it reached the peak of its controversial existence in the late 1950s it had become an institutionalized feature of the U.S. and Mexican agriculture. Although the bracero program has been defunct since 1965, it has left an important legacy for the economies, migration patterns and politics of the United States and Mexico. It is the intent of this essay to describe the operation of the program and to assess its development and legacy in historical context.

ANTECEDENTS

The roots of twentieth-century Mexican migration to the United States, characterized chiefly as a mass movement of rural laborers from specific regions in north-central Mexico to the U.S. southwest and midwest can be found in late nineteenth-century Porfirian Mexico. It is during those two decades that the mass of the rural population

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became landless as a result of Porfirio Díaz's policies; it is also during this period that most of the current south-north railroad grid was constructed and the internal migration of temporary agricultural laborers, especially young adult males, became noticeable.¹ By 1900, therefore, Mexico's economy and society had evolved in a manner which met the preconditions for mass labor migration to the United States.

The birth of the twentieth century was marked by a sudden increase in the volume of Mexican immigration. There were slightly more than one hundred thousand Mexican-born persons censused in 1900, by 1910 this number had doubled to 222,000, more than doubled by 1920 (486,000), and apparently doubled once again between 1920 and 1930.² Although there is some debate concerning the size of the Mexican-born population in 1930 -- some would revise the census count of 641,000 upward toward one million -- there can be no doubt that the first three decades of the century reflect a substantial growth in the stock of Mexican immigrants residing in the U.S.³

The temporary character of much of the Mexican settlement in the U.S. was demonstrated, however, by events following the onset of the Great Depression. As the fourth decade began, economic activity ground to a halt and Mexicans, like others, were thrown out of work.

¹Katz, 1976, pp. 15-73; Vernon, 1964, pp. 52, 80; González Navarro, 1957, pp. 26-27, 186; Taylor, 1971, pp. 10-117; McWilliams, 1939, pp. 11-27; McWilliams, 1968, pp. 144-68, García y Griego, 1973, pp. 1-62.

²U.S. Office of the Census, 1901, p. clxxiv; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1913, p. 781; 1922, p. 693; 1933, p. 225.

³See García y Griego, 1973, pp. 194-221 for a discussion of this.

Immigration to the U.S. slowed to a trickle and a mass return movement to Mexico began. According to Mexican government statistics, 345,000 Mexicans -- almost the number of immigrants counted in 1920 -- returned to their homeland between 1929 and 1932. The 1930 Mexican-born population was reduced to a fraction of what it had been by 1940.

An overview of the history of Mexican migration to the United States during the four decades prior to the bracero program suggests that four themes may be stressed: a) the characterization of much of the flow as the movement of temporary, or seasonal laborers; b) the operation of formal labor recruitment systems; c) the utilization of established repatriation mechanisms at selected points in time, especially during U.S. economic slowdowns; and, d) the involvement of U.S. and Mexican government agencies in influencing the nature and volume of the flow. These themes are interrelated to some extent, although it is useful to discuss them separately in order to form a composite picture of how pre-bracero program migration developed.

Without a doubt, a dominant feature of Mexican northward migration during this period was the presence of a strong component of seasonal labor migration. Although the annual net flow of Mexican immigrants during the first three decades of this century has been estimated to be between 18,000 and 30,000, the annual gross flow was estimated to be between 60,000 and 100,000.⁴ These estimates suggest a volume of return flow of 42,000 to 70,000 annually. Mexican govern-

⁴The estimates of annual net flow are based on the Mexican-born censused population of 1900 and 1930 cited earlier as well as an upper estimate of Mexican-born population in 1930 of one million. The gross flow estimates come from Clark, 1908, p. 466 and McBride, 1923, p. 33.

ment statistics regarding the return of its citizens seem to substantiate this estimate. They show an average annual return flow of 57,000 over the second and third decades of the period considered.⁵ Prior to 1930 the number of entries seems to have been considerably larger than the number of individuals who entered and remained in the U.S.

The occupations which Mexicans found in the U.S. -- menial, low-income and "stoop" tasks -- directly contributed to the seasonal nature of Mexican migration. Immigrants were principally found in the railroad industry, working as maintenance-of-way workers and in agriculture, as field hands. They were also employed as miners, quarrymen, copper workers, waiters, waitresses, laundresses and in other laborer-type occupations.⁶ Labor demand in these occupations was subject to great fluctuations. This not only encouraged seasonal international migration from Mexico but also internal migration of Mexicans within the United States. Since by 1920 the majority of Mexican immigrants were working at agricultural occupations, crop timetables obviously contributed to sharp seasonal fluctuations in labor demand.⁷

To assure that rises in labor demand would be met by an adequate supply of Mexican workers, formal as well as informal labor recruitment

⁵According to the *Boletín* of the *Servicio de Migración*, 1,050,634 Mexican citizens returned to Mexico between January 1, 1910 and June 30, 1928. Taylor, 1929b, pp. 240-41. Elsewhere in this study Taylor emphasizes the extensive back and forth flow of this migration (pp. 246, 248, 252, 254).

⁶Fuller, 1928, p. 67.

⁷McLean, 1928, pp. 130-131; Bogardus, 1934, p. 37.

systems came into being. They first appeared early in the twentieth-century when the railroads monopolized substantial numbers of workers. They were later supplemented by small agencies and labor contractors that assumed the task of channeling Mexican labor to specific employers, particularly farmers near the border who were willing to pay a higher wage than that offered by the railroad.⁸

Other employers, particularly those in the midwest, recruited from among Mexicans already on this side of the border, such as in migrant entrepots like El Paso or South Texas. These included the Detroit automobile industry in 1918, the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in 1923, the U.S. Steel plant in Lorain, Ohio in the same year, and the Alaska fish canneries at about the same time.⁹

Among the efforts of employers to recruit for Mexican labor perhaps those of the Great Western Sugar Company of Colorado were most noteworthy. This company relied upon thousands of Mexican laborers to cultivate and harvest its northern Colorado sugar beet crop every season. In 1920 the company sent advance agents throughout the states of New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri, working from house-to-house in Mexican communities, holding public meetings, running newspaper ads, and offering free transportation to the fields. That same year the company opened an office in El Paso to recruit laborers throughout the season, whereas in Fort Worth and San Antonio it used

⁸ Clark, 1908, pp. 470-471, 476; U.S. Bureau of Immigration, 1910, p. 123; Taylor, 1971, p. 151; Burma, 1954, pp. 39-40; Fisher, 1953, p. 31.

⁹ McWilliams, 1968, pp. 178-184; Taylor, 1931, p. 2. For a detailed discussion of domestic recruitment for agricultural labor in California see Fisher, 1953, pp. 48-55.

established labor agents.¹⁰ Even though this aggressive recruitment effort by Great Western was not typical of the process, it helps to illustrate the importance of recruitment in assuring an adequate labor supply for one employer. Individual labor contractors, or *enganchadores* appear frequently in the life-story of Mexican immigrants.¹¹ Small wonder that by 1929 the Texas Legislature adopted a law prohibiting the recruitment of laborers by out of state employers.

One of the results of this extensive recruitment program and of the seasonal or temporary occupation of Mexican laborers was that they occasionally found themselves to be redundant. Sporadic drops in the economy exacerbated this, generating local hostility to these unemployed foreign workers and arousing the concern of Mexican consular officials. The repatriation, or return of Mexican immigrants to their homeland dates back to the time that temporary immigration occurred.¹² During the four decades presently considered, however, formal mechanisms for the repatriation of Mexicans were set up. Two historical moments -- the recession of 1921 and the Great Depression of 1929-1933 -- stand out as times when unusually intense efforts were made to return immigrants to Mexico.

The recession of 1921 generated Mexican government interest in organizing a repatriation program, though few organizations outside of the consular network and Mexican border officials participated directly.

¹⁰Taylor, 1929a, pp. 131-133.

¹¹Tuck, 1948, pp. 58-59; Gamio, 1930, p. 10.

¹²Carreras de Velásco, 1974, pp. 43-45; González Navarro, 1975, p. 177.

These officials were authorized to offer free return transportation to the Mexican interior and subsistence to any repatriate who desired it.¹³ The government created a special *Departamento de Repatriaciones* within the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE)* to administer these efforts.¹⁴ One estimate places the number of repatriated Mexicans during 1921 at 100,000; one-fifth of the Mexican-born population counted in the 1920 census. The program was suspended in 1923.¹⁵

With the beginning of the Great Depression the Mexican government again became formally involved in the repatriation of its citizens from the United States. This time however, the effort was intensified; a *Comité Nacional de Repatriación* was created, duties on goods obtained in the U.S. were waived for returning migrants, and repatriates were included in the accelerating land distribution program of the revolutionary government.¹⁶ The scope of the effort was also broadened. Mexican consular officials linked their efforts to those being developed by U.S. local governments and charities who were organizing repatriation efforts on their own. The motivations that U.S. agencies had in promoting repatriation were twofold: reducing the number of persons subsisting on relief and removing a segment of the population increasingly perceived as a burden to the local community and as undesirable competi-

¹³Martínez, 1971, p. 74; Burma, 1954, p. 43.

¹⁴"Informe del General Alvaro Obregón, en la apertura de sesiones del Congreso, en el lo. de septiembre de 1921," reproduced in: México, Archivo Histórico Diplomático Mexicano, 1935, p. 327.

¹⁵Martínez, 1971, p. 76; Zorilla, 1966, vol. 2, pp. 373-374.

¹⁶Carreras de Velásco, 1974, pp. 73-97.

tion in the workplace.¹⁷ Between 1931 and 1934 the County of Los Angeles repatriated 13,000 Mexicans at its own expense; other communities, such as St. Paul, Minnesota; East Chicago, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan; Douglas, Arizona and the states of Ohio and Michigan seem to have organized similar, though less ambitious efforts.¹⁸

The agency responsible for the enforcement of immigration laws, the Bureau of Immigration, undertook a campaign at about the same time to deport Mexicans found in illegal status. Statistics suggest that the actual number of deportations was small -- a few thousand annually -- but the effect was magnified by the expulsion of persons who waived deportation proceedings and by the tactic of rounding up large numbers of persons in community sweeps accompanied by massive doses of local publicity.¹⁹

The official preoccupation with the repatriation of Mexicans, forced or otherwise, was not shared by the employers who had expended so much effort in bringing them north.²⁰ This led some observers to note that large employers, recruiters and labor contractors imported Mexicans for what were known to be temporary jobs, and after the work

¹⁷Hoffman, 1974, p. 39, notes that Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William Doak, reportedly calculated that there were 400,000 illegal aliens in the U.S. at that time, of which 100,000 could be deported. Doak's "solution" to the unemployment problem was "to oust any alien holding a job and to deport him."

¹⁸Hoffman, 1974, pp. 122-123, 172; Humphrey, 1940, passim.

¹⁹Hoffman, 1974, pp. 39-66 provides a detailed discussion of the deportation drive in the Los Angeles area during January-February, 1931.

²⁰An exception to this indifference on the part of employers for the repatriation of unemployed workers seems to have been that of Henry Ford, who provided transportation for 3,000 Mexican workers laid off, Martínez, 1971, p. 76. See also the cases of the Phelps Dodge Corporation and the Arizona Mining Col; Carreras de Velásco, 1974, p. 47.

period ended, they were set adrift. Emory Bogardus, writing at the height of the repatriation movement of the thirties stated:

Large employer organizations have no expense connected with the Mexican immigrant after he leaves their employ. They do not wish any. They refuse to take any responsibility in the matter. The Mexican is junked, just like an old machine, when most convenient to the employer, with the full knowledge that when help is again needed it will be forthcoming ... ²¹

Considering that less than a decade later the bracero program would be underway, these words were indeed prophetic. Moreover, they allude to the administered character of Mexican immigration prior to the end of the work period. Employers brought Mexican workers in when they were needed; when they were redundant and found to be undesirable, others assumed responsibility for taking them back home. Employers did not concern themselves with repatriating temporary or surplus employees because they did not have to.

Each of the two governments, U.S. and Mexican, also intervened in determining the course of this migratory flow. At times the U.S. government acted to attract Mexican immigrants; at others it acted to restrict their entry and to expel those already here. The Mexican government, on the other hand, was more consistent. With few exceptions it acted to retain or to return its citizens. The previously described policies for the twenties and early thirties were intensified during the Cárdenas administration (1934-40). Other actions not directly connected with repatriation policies, such as the massive distribution

²¹Bogardus, 1934, p. 46.

of land that was carried out in the north-central region of the country had the indirect effect of temporarily restraining Mexican emigration to the U.S.²²

To a great extent, the changing policies of the U.S. government seemed to be a function of the fluctuating economic conditions of the time. In 1909, when there was apparently a need for sugar beet workers, Presidents Taft and Porfirio Díaz negotiated an executive agreement authorizing the migration of a thousand Mexican contract laborers to the fields of Colorado and Nebraska.²³ In 1917, as the U.S. entered World War I, the prohibitions against contract labor were suspended and the U.S. unilaterally encouraged the entry of about 73,000 Mexican laborers for industries considered to be crucial to the war effort.²⁴

During the period 1917-24 a series of laws were passed by Congress for the purpose of restricting immigration and tightening government control over border crossings. Literacy tests and a head tax were imposed upon entering immigrants, a numerical limit for each country was set, visa fees were levied and the Border Patrol was created. (Mexicans and immigrants from other western hemisphere countries were exempted from the quota limitations until 1968.) Two mutually contradictory provisions were continued from prior legislation: the prohibition against contract labor and the exclusion of immigrants "likely to become a public

²²Cross and Sandos, 1979, pp. 17-24.

²³Moore, 1961, p. 5.

²⁴Martínez, 1971, p. 18; Corwin, 1973, pp. 620-621; Craig, 1971, p. 6.

charge." These restrictions allowed for wide latitude in administrative discretion. When Mexican immigration was restricted administratively after the mid-1920s, these two provisions made it possible to reject visa petitions from immigrants having no history of residence in the U.S. Mexicans admitted as immigrants in the late 1920s and during the 1930s were largely persons who were already residing (after having entered illegally) in the United States.²⁵

From the perspective of the United States the migration of Mexicans to this country was first and foremost a labor migration. One can attach symbolic value to the titles chosen by two researchers investigating this process during this period: Clark (1908) and Taylor (1927-1934) wrote not about Mexican immigration but about Mexican labor in the United States. The themes previously discussed in connection with migration during the period 1900-1940 -- seasonality, recruitment, repatriation and government intervention -- reinforce this aspect. Moreover, and notwithstanding the all-important economic forces propelling this migration, a review of its pre-bracero program history reveals that it was far from a spontaneous process.

During the period 1942-64, the duration of the Mexican contract labor program, some of the mechanisms noted in the earlier period became institutionalized. As a result of bilateral agreements between the governments of Mexico and the U.S. a formal system of labor recruitment was established. This system not only involved both governments

²⁵Hoffman, 1974, p. 32.

but also U.S. employers and Mexican employees, and at a final stage, U.S. labor unions and other organizations opposed to the continuation of the program. The formal structures were new but the informal patterns were a continuation of the immediate past.

WAR-TIME COOPERATION, 1942-1946

On August 4, 1942, the governments of the United States and Mexico embarked upon a program unprecedented in the history of both nations: the large-scale, sustained recruitment and contracting of temporary migrant workers under the aegis of an international agreement. This agreement was renewed several times during World War II, and, upon termination of the war, its termination was proposed by the State Department in 1946. At the same time the Congress extended the appropriations of the program to 1947 and Public Law 707, the first legislative authority for a post-war contract worker program was enacted. Since the next international agreement, that of March 10, 1947, introduced some substantial changes in the operation of the program, the year 1946 marks an appropriate terminus for what may be considered the first, simplest phase of the bracero program. (For a chronology of the contract labor program, see APPENDIX 2).

The period 1942-1946 is unique in a number of respects. First, it is the only time that Mexicans were recruited for both agricultural and non-agricultural employment under this program. Secondly, it is the only sustained period during which bracero workers, at the insistence of the Mexican government, were excluded from Texas. Thirdly, it is a period of extraordinary economic growth and great labor demand

in the United States. Had the braceros not been employed it is probable that a labor shortage would have resulted. Fourthly, the number of braceros contracted during this period was the smallest ever: approximately 82,000 annually.²⁶ Finally, it is the only sustained period during which the Mexican government seemed to have the upper hand during the negotiations.

The non-agricultural labor program involved the contracting of Mexicans to work in the U.S. railroads, especially in tasks related to the maintenance-of-way. It was an aberration in the movement of Mexican laborers to the United States.²⁷ Its administration by U.S. officials was entirely separate from the farm labor program, and many of its logistical functions, such as defining the specifications and requirements for labor, securing food and transportation facilities, carrying out recruitment and interviewing of workers and issuing Individual Work Agreements and cards, were the responsibility of a quasi-labor agency, the Railroad Retirement Board.²⁸ Moreover, at the end of the war there was an immediate effort to repatriate the contract workers and terminate the program, an effort which suffered relatively minor delays.

²⁶González Navarro, 1974, vol. 2, p. 146; Galarza, 1964, p. 79. The average annual figures were calculated without considering the 1942 recruitment season, which began late. According to Mexican statistics, 329,000 contracts were issued between 1943 and 1946 inclusive; according to U.S. statistics 333,000 contracts were issued during the same period.

²⁷My research indicates that only railroad workers were employed through the non-agricultural labor program, though attempts to use them in the San Diego naval yards and as forge and foundry workers, food workers, sawmill operators and in other capacities almost succeeded. McCain, 1970, pp. 182-192.

²⁸Kirstein, 1977, p. 28; McCain, 1970, p. 174.

In April of 1943, when contracting for the railroad program began, the agency nominally responsible for supervising the program, the War Relocation Authority approved construction and maintenance-of-way workers to the Southern Pacific, Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe and the Western Pacific railroads. The privilege of utilizing Mexican contract workers was extended the following year to twenty-one other railroads. By the time contracting stopped in 1945, a total of 35 railroads were involved. The majority of the railroad braceros worked in Montana, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and Southern Arizona; and over half worked for the Southern Pacific or the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe lines. At the peak of the railroad program in 1945, 69,000 workers were employed.²⁹

Because of the discriminatory treatment historically suffered by Mexicans in Texas, the Mexican government refused to certify braceros for employment in that state. As a response, Texas appointed its Good Neighbor Commission and lobbied strongly for its inclusion among the areas to receive contract laborers. It was unsuccessful in changing Mexican policy throughout the war. It was not until March 10, 1947 that Mexico first lifted its ban on Texas.³⁰ During the periods that the bracero agreement was not in force in the state of Texas its agricultural employers relied on undocumented or "wetback" labor.

Although the practice of unilateral blacklisting of certain areas in the U.S. by the Mexican government may not have reduced the discrim-

²⁹Kirstein, 1977, pp. 32-33; Galarza, 1964, p. 54

³⁰Kirstein, 1977, p. 71; Galarza, 1964, p. 56.

ination its citizens suffered in the United States, it did promote a greater awareness, and some embarrassment to U.S. officials, of the problem. Nonetheless, this approach became a serious bone of contention and it ended during the negotiations for the 1949 agreement.

The economic growth of agriculture, particularly in California was phenomenal during World War II. This increase in production was partially due to the employment of Mexican contract labor, but an even more important factor was the improvement of the technology applied by California farmers to increase the productivity of the land. The growth of industrial output, which employed no contract laborers at all, was even more impressive.

The displacement of domestic workers from agriculture to the growing war-time industries was noticeable as early as 1942. Employment in the building of ships shot up from 31,000 in 1941 to 274,000 in 1943; employment in the aircraft industry similarly exploded from 96,000 in 1941 to 236,000 in 1943.³¹ Those previously unemployed due to the depression went back to work, and the traditional barriers against the industrial employment of certain groups; women, blacks, non-union members and certain ethnic groups such as Mexicans; disappeared momentarily. Agricultural wages began to rise, though still below industrial levels, growers began to compete for labor and many of the informal wage agreements negotiated among farmers broke down, resulting in what was termed "labor piracy," the act of stealing another grower's workers from him. Wrote Fisher: "Whether a 'shortage' of agricultural

³¹Fisher, 1953, pp. 122-123; Kirstein, 1977, p. 12.

labor had developed by 1943 depends upon the definition given to the term 'shortage' ... but the labor market had clearly begun to change from a buyer's to a seller's market."³²

The beginning of the contract labor program was explained by this economist in this manner:

The one clear and unequivocal answer to the problem (of the labor shortage and rising wages) was to import labor ... any kind of labor ... indentured to agriculture and prevented by law from listening to the siren call of the shipyards. ³³

The agricultural labor market on the eve of the contract labor program was thus a tight market; a problem which from the point of view of the growers was obviated by the massive importation of contract laborers. By the end of World War II, however, because of the rising labor productivity, declining person-hours required to harvest labor-intensive products, and an increase in the number of domestic farmworkers available for agricultural work, the market had a surplus of workers, many of them braceros.

The position of the Mexican government with respect to the contract labor program during the cooperative era of 1942-46 had been shaped to a great extent by its experiences with the repatriation of

³²Fisher, 1953, p. 123.

³³Ibid., p. 124. He adds: "Years of experience by growers in California had demonstrated beyond peradventure that the surest means of controlling the wages of agricultural labor was by augmenting the labor supply." Ibid., p. 125. Elsewhere, (p. 16) he notes that the farmers were more likely to turn to labor importation than to increase wages for the purpose of increasing the labor supply. On pages 16-19 he proceeds to explain why, in theoretical terms, an increase in wages sometimes yields an opposite result from that expected, i.e., a decrease, rather than an increase in the supply of labor.

its citizens and with the unorganized recruitment carried out by *enganchadores* and private employers during the preceding decades. Controls over the international contracting of its citizens had been written into Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution and into the *Ley de Migración* of June 6, 1932.³⁴ The preparation that went into the negotiation of the agreement, and the reluctance of both governments to actually create a contract labor program at that time reveals an awareness that Mexico had not forgotten the mass repatriations of the 1930s and that the government would reflect a certain apprehensiveness about the emigration of its citizens at the negotiating table.³⁵

In 1942, the Mexican government was willing to consider an international labor agreement with the U.S. on the basis of a number of conditions which will be summarized as follows³⁶:

- a. Recruitment would be based on a written labor contract.
- b. The administration of the program would be carried out by both governments and contract compliance would be guaranteed by the same.

³⁴Galarza, 1964, p. 46.

³⁵McCain, 1970, p. 77. For a discussion of the inter-agency preparation among the Departments of State, Justice, Labor and Agriculture that led to the formulation of a U.S. position on a contract labor program during the spring and early summer of 1942, see pages 6-10, 12-23. McCain also notes (p. 11) that Mexican President Avila Camacho created an inter-departmental commission, among the Secretariats of *Gobernación, Relaciones Exteriores* and *Trabajo y Previsión Social* in May of 1942, prior to any official communication on a possible program from the United States.

³⁶Galarza, 1964, p. 47.

- c. Recruitment would be based on need, i.e., Mexican laborers would not displace domestic labor nor lower their wages,
- d. Employers would pay transportation and subsistence costs to and from the recruitment center and the work site,
- e. Migrants would not be encouraged to remain permanently in the U.S., and
- f. Racial discrimination, of the type where Mexicans were turned away from "white" restaurants and public facilities or sorted by color on buses would be prohibited.

The agreement which was signed on July 23, 1942, and was made effective by an exchange of diplomatic notes on August 4, incorporated all of the above elements and reflected the result of a relatively strong Mexican negotiating position in 1942.³⁷

The 1942 agreement created a labor recruitment and contracting system administered by a number of governmental agencies on both sides of the border. On the Mexican side the program involved the *Dirección de Asuntos de Trabajadores Migratorios (DATAM)* of the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE)*, officials of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, and the *Secretaria del Trabajo y Previsión Social*, the offices of state governors and the *presidentes municipales* of *municipios* (counties) where migrant workers resided.³⁸ DATAM served as the principal administrative center where operating decisions were made and information

³⁷McCain, 1970, p. 32; Craig, 1971, pp. 43-45.

³⁸See APPENDIX 1.

relative to Mexico's role in the international agreements was gathered during World War II. This agency was also responsible for assigning quotas to the Mexican states and for making sure that the requisite number of workers were assembled at the recruitment centers (Mexico City during 1942-44 and Guadalajara and Irapuato during 1944-47). Other Mexican agencies assumed more important functions in later years.³⁹

On the U.S. side, four Departments were involved in the administration of the program: State, Justice, Agriculture, and Labor. The federal agencies most actively involved were the U.S. Employment Service (USES) of the Department of Labor (DOL) and its state branches, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the Department of Justice. Also involved in the medical screening of the braceros at the contracting centers on the U.S. side was the U.S. Public Health Service.⁴⁰

The Mexicans who were screened and accepted by their government as bracero candidates were turned over to the Department of Labor (USES) representatives who acted as agents for employers: selecting those thought to be fit to do agricultural work and rejecting those thought to be unfit. Next, INS officers took fingerprints and prepared docu-

³⁹Galarza, 1964, pp. 80-81; Anderson, 1976, pp. 5-9. Salinas, 1955, pp. 63-97, describes the Mexican problems of administration observed ten years later, at a time when an *Oficina Central de Contratación* had been created within the *Secretaría de Gobernación*. The *Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social* was also involved in the assignment of quotas among Mexican states for railroad workers during the Second World War. McCain, 1970, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁰Galarza, 1964, p. 80. Also involved at the beginning were the Farm Security Administration, the War Food Administration and the War Manpower Commission.

mentation for those accepted, and the candidates were transported to U.S. contracting centers at the border. There they were screened by the U.S. Public Health Service and were then left to be considered by visiting employers and their agents.⁴¹

The formal relations of worker to employer were governed by the U.S.-Mexican Executive Agreement, the Individual Work Contract modeled after the Standard Work Contract attached to the Agreement, and the Joint Instructions and Interpretations issued after consulting on special cases during the operation of the program. The admission of temporary contract laborers was authorized by § 3 of the 1917 Immigration Act; after 1951 it operated under Public Law 78, enacted that year.⁴²

At the end of 1946 the posture of the U.S. government, though ambiguous, seemed to indicate that the bracero program was coming to an end. To be sure, Public Law 521, enacted on July 23 of that year, extended the appropriations of the program to 1947, and more importantly, Public Law 707, enacted on August 9, provided legislative authority for what could no longer be considered an emergency, war-time program. Nevertheless, the non-agricultural component of the bilateral agreement was terminated noisily, and the State Department formally proposed an end to the agricultural program within the time frame originally established. Thus, during the closing weeks of 1946 it appeared that the four-year program, with its 330,000 contracts issued, was about to pass into history. Difficult it would have been to imagine that an

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 82-83. The most thorough discussion of the work done by the U.S. Public Health Service appears in Anderson, 1976.

⁴²It was § 3 of the 1917 Act which permitted the Secretary of Labor to admit "otherwise inadmissible aliens applying for temporary admission" during the years 1917-1921 without the benefit of binational agreements. Kirstein, 1977, p. 25.

18-year future involving 4.3 million contracts awaited it.

TURBULENCE AND TRANSITION, 1947-54

Almost all of the significant changes that occurred between the early war-time program and the late contracting system of the 1960s can be found in the years 1947-54. This period is marked by international and domestic political conflict, the testing of alternatives, the creation of a new framework for the operation of the post-war contract labor program, and the shifting and reaccommodation of key players in the political process. It is, above all, a period of experimentation, discovery, creation, conflict and diplomatic confrontation, and painful soul-searching.

Since this period involves the evolution of the bracero program from a war-time to a peace-time activity where key interests and power politics were given a freer hand, a useful way to examine the complex intermeshed processes is to organize them according to the central issues discussed at that time. These issues fit into two broad categories: a) the problem of illegal, or "wetback" immigration, and b) certain issues of dispute between Mexico and the U.S. The reaccommodation of power relationships which largely grew out of two diplomatic confrontations, one in October, 1948 and the other in January, 1954, will be discussed in section c).

The post-war "wetback invasion"

The entry and presence of undocumented aliens, and specifically

Mexicans, became an important issue which drew increasing national attention and public hostility during the post-war years.⁴³ Since undocumented migration is a clandestine phenomenon, the public perception of a growing problem had to be based on a set of data considered to be a rough index of its volume. At that time as now, this data set consisted of INS apprehension statistics. A rapidly growing number of such apprehensions led an INS official to evaluate this phenomenon as "the greatest peacetime invasion complacently suffered by a country under open, flagrant, contemptuous violation of its laws."⁴⁴ While the perception of this migration as a growing threat is noticeable throughout the 1940s, it is the Report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor, issued in 1951, which directs official attention to it as a matter which required immediate attention.⁴⁵

The harsh proposals of the Commission -- penalties to be imposed for harboring, concealing or transporting illegal aliens; sanctions against employers of deportable aliens in the form of fines, imprisonment and the prohibition of interstate commerce of products made with illegal alien labor, and others -- crystallized a position which had

⁴³See news articles reproduced in American G.I. Forum, 1953, pp. 15-16, 28-30, 46, and citations on p. 58; also, news articles cited by Massa Gil, 1959, especially pp. 25-31, 45-97.

⁴⁴INS Reporter, January, 1954, cited by Galarza, 1964, p. 59. Three years earlier, the President's Commission on Migratory Labor had written: "The number of deportations and voluntary departures has continuously mounted each year ... In its newly achieved proportions, it is virtually an invasion. It is estimated that at least 400 thousand of our migratory farm labor force of 1 million in 1949 were wetbacks Before 1944 employment of wetbacks was largely at hand labor in agriculture; now they are infiltrating a wide range of nonfarm jobs and occupations." U.S. President's Commission, 1951, pp. 69-70. (emphasis added)

⁴⁵See pp. 69-88, and especially the recommendations for legislation which appear on pp. 88, 180.

been slow to develop in the United States. The Mexican government throughout the 1940s had seen the extra-legal emigration of its workers as a threat to the bracero system and to the agricultural interests in Mexico whose access to labor it wanted to assure.

As early as 1943, therefore, Mexico took the lead in attempting to develop binational cooperation for the control of clandestine north-bound migration.⁴⁶ The U.S. was more equivocal. "Even in 1952 and 1954, when the wetbacks were in full tide," wrote Galarza, "senators and representatives from the border states took the lead in cutting back appropriations for the Border Patrol. With the purse half shut the gate could remain half open." Testimony of border patrol officers indicate that immigration law enforcement, particularly along the Texas border, was deliberately lax and selective.⁴⁷

As early as 1949, Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico had introduced a bill (S. 272) arguing for an open border and virtually unrestricted recruitment from Mexico.⁴⁸ The following year, the chief inspector at the port of Tucson, testifying before the President's Commission on Migratory Labor noted that he "received orders from the District Director at El Paso each harvest to stop deporting illegal Mexican labor."⁴⁹ A report from South Texas at about the same time indicates that a senior officer kept his force of border patrolmen away from certain farms and

⁴⁶McCain, 1970, p. 300.

⁴⁷Galarza, 1964, p. 61; McCain, 1970, pp. 268-289.

⁴⁸Kirstein, 1977, pp. 73-74.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 90.

ranches in his district.⁵⁰ The justification for this flexible approach to the enforcement of immigration law was expressed by the chief INS official responsible for this enforcement in testimony before Congress in 1951: "'We do feel we have the authority to permit to remain in the United States aliens who are here as agricultural workers whether they are here legally or not.'"⁵¹

Notwithstanding the numerous proposals presented by the President's Commission and other interested groups to cope with the tide of undocumented migration, only two strategies were seriously applied: legalization (1947-51) and mass expulsion accompanied by the facilitation of more bracero contracts to those desiring them (1953-55). Both processes involved the transformation of illegal labor migration or migrants to legal (contract) labor migration or migrants. The first process was called "drying out the wetbacks" while the second culminated in a campaign run by newly-appointed Commissioner General Swing called "Operation Wetback."

To a great extent, the immediate post-war period was characterized by the legalization of "wetbacks" rather than by the new importation of contract laborers. Legalization was a process by which deportable Mexicans were given bracero contracts, usually to work for the same employer, without having to return to Mexico and undergo the screening process in the interior described earlier. This first occurred as a result of a U.S.-Mexican agreement in 1947, when 55,000 undocumented

⁵⁰American G.I. Forum, 1953, p. 42.

⁵¹quoted in Galarza, 1964, p. 63.

Mexicans in Texas (which up to that time had not received any contract laborers) were legalized as braceros.⁵² During the years 1947-49, according to the President's Commission on Migratory Labor, 74,600 Mexican contract laborers were imported; 142,200 deportable Mexicans already in the U.S. were legalized and put under contract.⁵³ During fiscal year 1950, only 19,813 new braceros were admitted as contract laborers; 96,239 undocumented Mexicans already here were "dried out" as a result of an international agreement.⁵⁴ By the time of the Report of the President's Commission in 1951, it had become abundantly clear that this strategy was not curbing illegal immigration; and that Commission successfully recommended that the practice be abolished.⁵⁵ However, this practice did convince many employers that under certain conditions bracero labor was to be preferred over undocumented labor.⁵⁶

The mass expulsion of deportable Mexicans during the early 1950s was a strategy that met with greater, though temporary success. It seems to have curbed illegal entry, not so much because of the threat of expulsion per se, but because of softened grower resistance to the enforcement of immigration laws as new conditions made the substitution of braceros for "wetbacks" increasingly attractive. Changes in employer

⁵²U.S. President's Commission, 1951, p. 52.

⁵³Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁴Galarza, 1964, p. 63.

⁵⁵U.S. President's Commission, 1951, pp. 88, 180.

⁵⁶Hundreds of agricultural employers joined farm labor associations during the years 1951-54 on the condition that the deportable Mexicans then in their employ would be approved for bracero contracts. Regional Foreign Labor Operations Advisory Committee, Minutes, 1955, cited by Galarza, 1964, p. 64.

attitudes toward the bracero program are reflected by the fact that increasing numbers of growers joined farm associations in the early 1950s in order to procure contract labor.⁵⁷ The number of deportable Mexicans apprehended dropped precipitously after 1954, and by 1958, the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* was implicitly editorializing that "the era of the 'wetbacks' (had passed) into history."⁵⁸ Hindsight tells us, of course, that they editorialized too soon.

"Operation Wetback," the campaign organized by the military man who had now become INS Commissioner, has been the source of much controversy, but it has yet to be adequately researched. It seems to have come after a tour of inspection carried out by Attorney General Herbert Brownell during the month of August, 1953.⁵⁹ On June 17, 1954, Operation Wetback began with the deployment of 800 Border Patrol officers in Mexican communities and public places throughout Southern California. These officers had impressive support: local and state authorities and police, the FBI, the Army and Navy, aircraft, boats, automobiles and special task forces, not to mention the employers, i.e., the farmers themselves. Many who were apprehended were flown or transported to the interior of Mexico with financial support by the Mexican government. In the months following the operation moved into Texas, the midwest and the Pacific

⁵⁷Galarza, 1964, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁸"La época de los 'espaldas mojadas' pasa a la historia," *Excelsior*, August 24, 1958. Craig, 1971, p. 129 also notes that when the U.S. and Mexico concluded an agreement relating to illegal migration on April 14, 1955, "the wetback had, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist."

⁵⁹Craig, 1971, p. 127; Galarza, 1964, p. 70.

northwest.⁶⁰ Operation Wetback was sanctioned by public opinion which blamed "wetbacks" for disease, labor strikes in agriculture, subversive and Communist infiltration, border crimes, low retail sales in some areas and adverse effects on domestic labor.⁶¹

In retrospect, it is clear that the post-war "wetback" problem was "solved," not by closing the border to Mexican migration but by regulating it: by transforming "wetbacks" into braceros in terms that employers were willing to accept. For the period prior to 1955, in addition to INS apprehension statistics there is evidence to show that the presence of undocumented Mexicans in agricultural employment was widespread and even prevalent in some areas, particularly along the border. The sharp drop in the number of apprehensions and the abrupt increase in the number of bracero contracts issued at the turning point 1953-54 are hardly unconnected events. U.S. statistics show that 201,000 contracts were issued and 865,000 apprehensions registered in 1953.⁶² Two years later, the number of contracts had doubled and apprehensions had been cut to less than one-third of what they had been.⁶³ Later, during the years 1960-64 when the number of contracts issued was declining, it should not surprise us that the number of apprehensions was increasing

⁶⁰ Samora, 1971, p. 52; Galarza, 1964, pp. 70, 255; Craig, 1971, p. 129.

⁶¹ González Navarro, 1974, vol. 2, p. 199; Galarza, 1964, p. 70; American G.I. Forum, 1953, pp. 17-25, 28-32, 34-36.

⁶² Galarza, 1964, p. 79; Samora, 1971, p. 46. Contracts issued apparently refer to calendar years and apprehensions to fiscal years. Mexican statistics show that 131,000 (70,000 fewer) contracts were issued in 1953. González Navarro, 1974, vol. 2, p. 146.

⁶³ The number of contracts issued, according to both U.S. and Mexican sources, rose to 399,000. Galarza, 1964, p. 79; González Navarro, 1974, vol. 2, p. 146. In 1955, 243,000 deportable Mexicans were apprehended. Samora, 1971, p. 46.

gradually.

Diplomacy and dispute on selected issues

The period 1947-54 registers sharp confrontations between the governments of the United States and Mexico and a growing public debate on the formal aspects of the contract labor program. Those issues in dispute which are discussed herein are: i) the location of the recruitment centers in Mexico, ii) the practice employed by the Mexican government of blacklisting areas and employers due to discrimination, iii) the wages earned by contract laborers, and iv) the relative merits of government-to-government and employer-to-worker agreements. To varying degrees, each of these issues led to breakdowns in negotiations during this eight-year period, and each of them contributed to the mounting of tensions immediately preceding the two border incidents and diplomatic confrontations.

Out of this turbulence, two major and inter-connected themes emerge: the deterioration of the bargaining position of the Mexican government and the gradual realization of the Mexican literate public that its government had virtually no control over emigration to the United States. As a result of these two processes, the bracero program came to be perceived as a necessary evil which provided an escape valve for rural poverty and unemployment. These perceptions arose from the weakened Mexican position on the one hand, and led to attempts during the 1960s to prevent the demise of the program on the other.

The U.S. position on the location of the recruitment centers,

being influenced by the interests of agricultural employers, was that recruitment should be done as close to the border as possible. Having recruitment centers there rather than in the Mexican interior was attractive to the employer because it would have meant lower transportation and subsistence costs since these were assumed by the employer at the time the candidate was accepted at the center.⁶⁴

The Mexican position held that recruitment centers should be located in the interior, hundreds of miles from the border. This position seems to have been determined by two principal considerations; first, that the labor supply of large Mexican agriculturalists in the northern states of Sonora, Chihuahua and Sinaloa might be adversely affected by border recruitment, and secondly, that Mexican control over the migration process, in view of illegal migration, was directly proportional to the distance the centers were located away from the border.⁶⁵

The location of the recruitment centers gradually shifted north. During the war, Mexicans were recruited in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Irapuato. During the period 1947-54 new centers were located closer to or at the border: Monterrey, Chihuahua, Zacatecas, Tampico, Aguascalientes, Hermosillo and Mexicali. Beginning in 1955, Mexican statistics show that some braceros were officially contracted at the border, and Empalme, Sonora also appears as a new recruitment center location.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Kirstein, 1977, p. 67; Craig, 1971, p. 104.

⁶⁵ Galarza, 1964, p. 77.

⁶⁶ González Navarro, 1974, pp. 146-147; Galarza, 1964, pp. 52, 81.

The demise of the Mexican negotiating position on this issue had occurred as early as 1950, even though it may not have been evident to the public until later. On August 18 of that year the Mexican government did not seek to prevent the issuance of work certificates to Mexicans at the border and in the interior of the U.S., regardless of the date of entry. "Although Mexico expressed concern about the total withdrawal of wetback restraint," wrote Kirstein, "there was no abrogation, there was no protest note -- just a request that publicity of the Mexican-supported open border 'be restricted.'"⁶⁷

The practice of blacklisting certain areas in the U.S. by the Mexican government for the purpose of barring the use of braceros was another source of international conflict in which Mexico's position was gradually undermined. These bans were motivated by Mexican perceptions that employers in those areas had not lived up to the terms of the agreements and by concerns that Mexican citizens in those places were subjected to discrimination. The first concern led to a brief ban imposed upon eight midwestern and northwestern states in 1946 because of reported violations of the agreement by sugar beet employers.⁶⁸ The second concern led to the prohibition of Mexican contract labor in Texas until the legalization of undocumented workers already there in 1947.⁶⁹ The Mexican perception that Texas farmers proceeded to violate the terms

⁶⁷ The secret study, cited by Kirstein, 1977, p. 76

⁶⁸ McCain, 1970, pp. 330-334.

⁶⁹ McCain, 1970, pp. 274, 278-279, 284, 288-289.

of the contracts imposed upon them with the acceptance of legalized labor led to their decision to close Texas to further bracero contracting on September 26 of that year. Mexico had reimposed the ban.⁷⁰

The Mexican position during the January-February, 1949 negotiation sessions held that a blacklisted area would not be allowed to receive workers until three conditions were met:

"... first, the principal county and municipal authorities of the towns nearest the area involved had to furnish a written guarantee, in the name of the community, that Mexicans would not suffer any discrimination; second, state and federal authorities also had to guarantee that there would be no discrimination; third, if discrimination did nevertheless occur, the Mexican Consul in the area was to request the USES to initiate a joint investigation. Should discrimination be verified, the employer-worker contracts were to be cancelled. If the USES and the Mexican Consul differed as to the presence of discrimination, the issue should be unilaterally resolved by the Mexican foreign minister."⁷¹

The U.S. argued for joint determination of blacklisted areas, and, linking it to another issue, "insisted that eradication of the wetback traffic was contingent upon removal of the Texas ban ..." By early summer of 1949, the Mexican government had given in, and the bracero program was salvaged by agreeing that bans would be determined jointly. The blacklisting of Texas had been decisively reversed.⁷²

Disputes between the U.S. and Mexico concerning the levels of

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 290.

⁷¹Kirstein, 1977, p. 70.

⁷²Ibid.

wages to be paid to braceros by farm employers arose from the nature of the agreement itself. The President's Commission correctly characterized the negotiation of the agreements as a "collective bargaining situation" where Mexico represented its workers and the U.S. its employers. Moreover, the SRE, wrote Galarza, "had never concealed its polite indignation over the low wages prevailing in the Southwest."⁷³ According to Galarza, Mexican pressures to raise the wages paid to braceros led to the two open border incidents which occurred in 1948 and 1954. The U.S. response was to accuse the Mexican consuls of attempting to set the wage at rates higher than those prevailing, to blame the "wetback" influx upon Mexican intransigence and to insist that "if farm employers were to be persuaded to give up hiring illegals 'certain modifications in the agreement and in the work contract are imperative.'"⁷⁴

The original Mexican position during the 1942 agreements was that Mexican labor was to have been paid the "prevailing wage" in the communities where braceros were sent. As the Mexican government began to realize that the prevailing wage was whatever the employers decided it would be,⁷⁵ it developed a new position which assumed that the "prevailing" was negotiable. Its attempt to raise wages for cotton pickers in 1948, however, was unsuccessful. The death knell of the new Mexican position was sounded by the terms of the 1951 agreement which

⁷³U.S. President's Commission, 1951, p. 50; Galarza, 1964, p. 77.

⁷⁴Galarza, 1964, p. 65.

⁷⁵Prevailing wages were determined at pre-harvest season meetings where farmers agreed in advance on what wages would prevail. Galarza, 1964, p. 111; Fisher, 1953, pp. 91-116; U.S. President's Commission, 1951, pp. 59-60; American G.I. Forum, 1953, p. 50.

stated that the U.S. Secretary of Labor would have the exclusive responsibility for determining the level of the wages prevailing. After the second major diplomatic confrontation in 1954, the Joint Determination signed that year reaffirmed the same principle.⁷⁶

A final issue which grew out of the conflicts of the years 1947-54 was the question of the relative merits of government-to-government and worker-to-employer agreements. The war-time agreements were of the former type: they required close governmental supervision over recruitment, selection, transportation, the issuance of contracts, the investigation of complaints and the assurance of contract compliance. The 1948 agreement introduced some changes in the program that moved it in the direction of the latter type of agreement: Individual Worker Contracts were issued on a worker-to-employer basis and the responsibility of INS and USES for assuring compliance was removed.⁷⁷ Experimentation with less formal versions of the bracero program continued until Congressional approval of Public Law 78 in 1951.

The passage of Public Law 78 came partially as a result of Mexican insistence that a formal structure for the execution of bilateral agreements be created and that there be a return to a government-to-government program. The President's Commission, whose report had been issued as the enactment of Public Law 78 was being debated, also argued for an end to the employer-to-worker experiment.

Mexican insistence that the experiment come to an end was moti-

⁷⁶Galarza, 1964, pp. 77-78.

⁷⁷Kirstein, 1977, p. 65.

vated by its perception that U.S. employers frequently violated the terms of the agreements negotiated between 1948 and 1951 and that the most feasible way to assure compliance was to place the responsibility for their enforcement on the shoulders of the U.S. government.⁷⁸ Mexican pressures for assuring accountability could therefore be expressed through the familiar channels of diplomatic protest and bilateral negotiations.

The passage of Public Law 78 and the end of the informal period of contracting could be narrowly construed to be a victory for the Mexican vis-à-vis the U.S. position. However, the U.S. position shifted during the post-war years from one exclusively determined by powerful agricultural interests to another which was influenced by other segments of the U.S. public. These other segments demanded that the U.S. assert some control over contract labor migration, and not leave it exclusively in the hands of employers. Their position was typified by that of the President's Commission.

The adoption of Public Law 78 was a hollow victory for the Mexican government. To be sure, the mechanisms to assure contract compliance were formally in place once again, but by this time the Mexican negotiating position had so deteriorated that it did not matter much. The years after the 1951 agreement are marked by Mexican acquiescence to a program whose specifics would have been rejected out of hand at any point prior to 1947.

⁷⁸Galarza, 1964, p. 75; Salinas, 1955, pp. 11-29.

Two open border incidents

In the summer of 1948 the U.S. government pressured Mexico to allow for recruitment along the border; Mexico yielded partially by agreeing to establish a recruitment center in Mexicali and by proposing centers to be established in interior cities of other border states. According to a secret study uncovered by Kirstein in the Truman Library, representatives of DOL, INS and the State Department met to discuss the pros and cons of opening the border to illegal entrants and to unilaterally disrupt the 1948 agreement. Mediated by the White House, the final position seems to have been that the agreement would be adhered to.⁷⁹

However, between October 13 and 18 the border port of El Paso was opened to several thousand Mexicans waiting to come in to work:

"The *braceros* ... waded the shallow river in sight of the Border Patrol, which received them with formality, herded them into temporary enclosures and immediately paroled them to the cotton growers, who trucked the men at once to the fields."⁸⁰

The Mexican government responded by abrogating the 1948 agreement, formally announcing that it would reserve the possibility of filing claims due to damages inflicted upon its agricultural production in the north due to the uncontrolled exodus of border resident laborers. The U.S. formally apologized for the incident days later.⁸¹

As a result of his review of the Secret study, Kirstein concluded

⁷⁹Kirstein, 1977, p. 67.

⁸⁰Galarza, 1964, p. 49.

⁸¹Galarza, 1964, p. 50; Craig, 1971, p. 69; Kirstein, 1977, p. 68.

that the order to open the border did not emanate from the White House but rather that it was a decision made within the INS and USES. However, he pointedly noted that no disciplinary action was taken against the officials that created the "El Paso incident," as it became known, and that the U.S. used the incident to place new conditions on the table upon reopening negotiations during January-February, 1949.⁸²

However, the planning for the second incident, which occurred in 1954, did clearly involve the highest levels of the U.S. government. Serious disagreements were apparent on all of the key issues during the fall of 1953, coupled with a hardline position by the new Eisenhower Administration.⁸³ On January 15, 1954, the Departments of Justice, State, and Labor issued a joint press release announcing that braceros would be contracted unilaterally until a binational accord was reached. Mexico responded sharply by announcing that braceros could no longer be legally contracted to work in the U.S. and by exhorting Mexican laborers to stay at home.⁸⁴

The Mexican position resulted in an anomolous situation: the U.S. advocating an open border at the expense of the interests of its neighbor. During the last week of January, hundreds of Mexican workers gathered at Mexican border cities with the expectation of entering the U.S.

⁸²Kirstein, 1977, pp. 70, 76.

⁸³Craig, 1971, pp. 105-106.

⁸⁴Galarza, 1964, p. 66; Craig, 1971, pp. 109-110. For examples of Mexican press statements in 1954 consult the January and February, 1954 volumes of the news clippings collection "Campesinos Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos," located in the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada in Mexico City.

Mexican local police converged upon mobs, attempting to disperse them and to prevent their entry to the United States. As some of the men raced across the line they were snatched back into Mexico while Border Patrol officers extended a helping hand from the other side. Moreover, other undocumented migrants already in the U.S. were brought to the line, told to step across briefly to meet the legal requirement of re-entry, and then legalized by INS officials. The tussle all this entailed was illustrated graphically by a photograph published in the February, 1954 issue of the *Hispanic American Report* depicting a bracero pulled in a tug of war between a Mexican border official and a U.S. officer.⁸⁵

Mexico's attempts to prevent the emigration of its citizens were briefly intensified. The government deployed troops to Ensenada, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales and other points, border guards repelled the rush of illegal crossers with clubs, fists, waterhoses and by firing into the air. In Mexicali 500 would-be braceros marched on the governor's palace demanding jobs or food; soldiers turned them back with fire hoses. As President Ruiz Cortines received reports that the international confrontation was turning into a domestic crisis, he ordered Mexican troops withdrawn from the border and instructed Mexican officials not to oppose any citizen attempting to cross illegally with the use of force. The policy had failed; the Mexican government backed down.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Galarza, 1964, p. 66; Craig, 1971, pp. 112-113.

⁸⁶Galarza, 1964, p. 68; Craig, 1971, pp. 112-113; "A pesar de la excitativa oficial, empezó la fuga de braceros, guardia armada de México en la línea, ello, después de que salieron 700 por Calexico y otros por Laredo," *Excelsior*, January 23, 1954.

In the aftermath of the diplomatic crisis it was discovered that the U.S. government could not legally spend funds on unilateral recruiting. This problem was solved by the passage of Joint Resolution 355, amending Public Law 78 to read that funds could be appropriated for unilateral contracting if attempts to negotiate a bilateral agreement failed.⁸⁷ The implications of this were not lost on the Mexican negotiators.

The crisis of January, 1954 was a rude awakening for the Mexican public. In his state of the union address in 1954, President Ruiz Cortines "deplored the migration of laborers but concluded that it was unavoidable because the country did not have enough work to hold the braceros."⁸⁸ A columnist writing in a Mexico City newspaper in February wondered out loud: "Is it possible to prevent the emigration of braceros?"⁸⁹ Other Mexicans, within and without the government were asking themselves the same question. The 1954 incident, like its 1948 predecessor, demonstrated that the answer was "no."

APOGEE AND DEMISE, 1955-64

By 1955 the bracero program was well into what Craig calls the

⁸⁷ Galarza, 1964, p. 69.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

⁸⁹ Fernando Robles, "¿Será posible detener la emigración de los braceros?" (opinion column), *El Universal*, February 9, 1954, in collection "Campesinos Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos." For a discussion of the internal debate in Mexico about the causes of emigration see Craig, 1971, pp. 118-121. Of the discussion on the "escape valve theory" by González Navarro, 1974, vol. 2, pp. 158-61, 177-178. A review of Mexico City clippings in the aforementioned collection confirms the process that Craig describes.

"era of stabilization," that period when serious disagreements between Mexico and the U.S. did not surface and substantive changes in the formal operation of the program did not occur. It is also the period when the adverse effects of the importation of foreign workers emerged as the issue which ultimately led to the end of the contract labor program.

Early opposition to the importation of foreign workers, 1947-49, was based on claims that it undermined strikes, working conditions and farm wages. At that time, the NAACP issued public statements to that effect and the National Farm Labor Union, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, enlisted the support of the Federal Advisory Council of the Bureau of Employment Security within DOL. An appraisal of the currency that this position had at that time, however, can be made by considering that although the President's Commission showed that the before and after use of braceros correlated negatively with the rising agricultural wages, it did not propose an end to the program but rather it argued for modifications which would assure that certifications of need would be based on shortages and that the USES be removed entirely from the administration of the program.⁹⁰

Growers opposed these interpretations of the contract labor program, arguing that braceros were more efficient than native workers who "would not do the work," and that far from constituting a source of cheap labor they were more expensive than domestic workers since employers were responsible for transportation costs, insurance, bonds,

⁹⁰ Kirstein, 1977, pp. 74, 83; Galarza, 1977, p. 114; U.S. President's Commission, 1951, pp. 56-59, 63, 66. Cf: McCain, 1970, p. 338.

and were subject to the terms of the agreement. There is superficial evidence to support these arguments separately in individual cases, but as arguments for the program as a whole they are self-contradictory. As Galarza correctly noted, it is untenable to hold that Mexican contract labor was simultaneously more expensive (in terms of gross outlays) but less costly (in terms of per unit costs). He further stated: "contrary to the iron laws of supply and demand, which are nowhere more ironic than in agriculture, the dearer type of labor was driving out of the market the cheaper."⁹¹

The substitution of domestic labor by contracted labor proceeded apace throughout this final phase of the program. California farm labor statistics tell part of the story. From December, 1949 to September, 1959, the peak number of braceros at work in the state shot up from 7,500 to 84,000. Peak employment of local domestic seasonal workers for the same years declined almost 20,000 from 150,000 to 131,500. In certain crops, such as sugar beets, and in certain areas, such as San Diego and Imperial counties, non-contract labor had virtually disappeared. Comparisons to out of state or non-local workers are more illustrative. Contract labor in 1949 was a mere fraction -- less than 30 percent -- of non-local harvest labor; ten years later there were two contract workers for every non-local harvest laborer. "Plainly," asserted Galarza, "the native inter-state migrant, about whose peripetetic misery a copious and sympathetic literature had accumulated, was close to extinction in California."⁹²

⁹¹Galarza, 1964, p. 106.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 94-95. It appears that undocumented foreign labor was included in the category "non-local domestic seasonal workers."

Over the course of the 1950s when most bracero workers were employed, wages in agricultural areas that employed them remained constant or dropped. In any event, they never got much higher than "wetback" standards, thus facilitating the simultaneous use of domestic, contract and undocumented labor in the same crews.⁹³

The impact of the importation of contract laborers on the harvest labor market can be best understood by considering some of its features from an economic perspective. Lloyd Fisher developed a theory in 1953 which explains many of the seeming contradictions and nuances of the harvest labor market in California. He noted first that harvest labor demand is best expressed in terms of hours of labor and not just laborers *per se*; an effort to minimize the risk of disease, bad weather, spoilage and an unwillingness to accept some unevenness of quality translates itself into an effort to minimize the time spent on the harvest itself. Since labor was paid piece-rate and not by the hour, there are no diminishing returns to adding labor and the farmer seemingly has an insatiable demand for it. In this context, the cries of shortages at a time when surpluses of labor persisted seem to be consistent and explainable. As Fisher clearly pointed out, a labor shortage is not an absolute in harvest agriculture, it is a term that begs to be defined.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 105. In the Laredo area there reportedly occurred instances where braceros were actually paid slightly more than domestic labor, a reflection of farmer's preferences for contract laborers in the 1950s. The researchers of the study that uncovered these instances attribute this finding to the vulnerable position of braceros, faced with the continual threat of being sent home. *American G.I. Forum*, 1953, p. 53.

⁹⁴ Fisher, 1953, pp. 6, 123, 151-160.

As has already been mentioned, the two decades spanned by the bracero program was a period of growth in agricultural output and in farm labor productivity, increased use of technological aids and mechanization, and a declining demand for agricultural labor-time. The effect that the increased use of contracted labor had on such a situation was to increase the flow but maintain the stock constant, i.e., to increase the number of individuals working but decrease the length of time they worked. The President's Commission noted a marked post-war tendency to underutilize farm workers: the days of farm work per laborer declined from an average of 113 days in 1946 to 90 in 1949.⁹⁵

The trend toward shortened harvest periods and mechanization, coupled with the relative immobility of agricultural workers from farm to industrial occupations placed both contract and domestic workers in a situation where more were competing for less. The relatively high development of organization among agricultural employers on one hand, and the weak position of farm labor and its organizations on the other meant that the importation of labor clearly deteriorated its economic position.⁹⁶ The National Agricultural Workers Union, the result of an early attempt to organize California agricultural workers, thus directed most of its energies not toward attacking the growers directly, but toward stopping the Mexican contract labor program.⁹⁷

⁹⁵U.S. President's Commission, 1951, p. 30.

⁹⁶Fisher, 1953, pp. 13-16. McCain, 1970, p. 342 notes that the extension of the program into the post-war period (April 22, 1947) was so late in the season that beet producers, fearful that imported labor would not be available, recruited domestic workers (Chicanos) from South Texas. The result was a surplus of labor in a number of areas, "even in the peak periods." Regional Office personnel of the Department of Agriculture reported, ironically, that "the great influx of domestic workers into their regions precluded effective utilization of the braceros, precipitating early release."

⁹⁷Galarza, 1977, pp. 356-357.

The emphasis that the National Agricultural Workers Union gave to exposing the bracero program found expression in a research project directed by Ernesto Galarza which was published in 1956 under the title Strangers in Our Fields. This report recorded the abuses of the bracero system with depth and perception, oftentimes by reproducing interviews held with the braceros in and out of work camps in California. Galarza's interviews and his review of pay stubs and receipts for camp meals and other services deducted led him to conclude that "in almost every area covered by the International Agreement, United States law, state law, and the provision of the work contract, serious violations of the rights of Mexican nationals were found to be the norm rather than the exception."⁹⁸

The response to Strangers by agricultural interests was predictably negative. The official response by the DOL, however, was silence, and its unofficial response constituted the beginning of a reassessment of its position vis-à-vis the contract labor program.⁹⁹

The same year that Strangers was published marked the beginning of a new effort by DOL to tighten its administration of Public Law 78 and to adopt a more skeptical attitude concerning employer compliance with the agreements. In December, 1956, the Department improved the standards applied to bracero housing; in the summer of 1958 a new formula for determining prevailing wages and to assure a minimum hourly rate was applied. In October, 1959, a Consultant's Report released its findings;

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 252-253.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 253-256.

it recommended actions that the Secretary of Labor could take to reduce the adverse effects of the importation of braceros. In November, DOL issued new regulations setting minimum standards for the wage and working conditions of domestic workers recruited through the farm placement service of the Labor Department. During this period, the actions of the Department and the records of their private meetings indicate the reluctant admission that many of the allegations in Strangers were true.¹⁰⁰

As early as 1957 farmers in the state of California began to sense that opposition to Public Law 78 was mounting and that the contract labor system was being seriously threatened. Local grower associations began to exhort their members to "not turn down domestic labor applicants" and one demanded its members to sign a pledge of honest compliance or they would be dropped. Caught between DOL's mild, but increasingly forceful attempts to assure compliance and minimize adverse effects and a shifting public opinion moving against the bracero program, farmers were becoming less comfortable with a system that they had worked hard to create. Mechanization, particularly for those engaged in cultivating cotton, became a soughtafter alternative.¹⁰¹

Beginning in 1960, opposition to the bracero program mounted in Congress. During the session of that year, acrimonious debate postponed the extension of Public Law 78 until the last day, at which time a six-month extension was secured. This was the first attack on the program in Congress to have impact. In 1961, the program was extended for another

¹⁰⁰Craig, 1971, pp. 151-154; Galarza, 1977, pp. 272-273.

¹⁰¹Galarza, 1977, pp. 271-272; Craig, 1971, pp. 151, 176, 180-181.

two years; the anti-bracero forces had gained in strength though they were unable to bring the program to an immediate end. In 1962 the Kennedy administration openly opposed Public Law 78, and in 1963 the program was extended on final time.¹⁰²

The final extension of the program was obtained only after pro-bracero advocates revealed that there was substantial opposition by the Mexican government to an abrupt termination of the program. A diplomatic dispatch from Mexico dated June 21, 1963, argued that an end to the contracting system would not end the migratory process behind it. The absence of Public Law 78 and the lack of an international agreement would have serious effects upon Mexican unemployment and an increased legal and illegal immigration volume would result. The dispatch was placed into the *Congressional Record* on August 15, and the argument that diplomatic relations would be damaged by ending the program bought an additional year's time.¹⁰³ On December 31, 1964, the Mexican contract labor program came to an end.

LESSONS AND LEGACY

During the 22-year history of the bracero program, 4.6 million contracts were issued to Mexican workers coming to the U.S. for temporary employment. A phenomenon of this magnitude and duration does not end without leaving an historical legacy. While the lessons of the past are not always entirely applicable to the future, since at present there is

¹⁰²Craig, 1971, pp. 155-185; Kirstein, 1977, p. 104.

¹⁰³Craig, 1971, pp. 186-187.

some discussion about reverting to something akin to a contract labor program, a brief overview of its legacies may be instructive, though necessarily speculative.

The impact of the bracero program on the migration process itself has not been studied enough, although clear inferences can be drawn from available data. The importation of laborers under contract largely reinforced the characteristic features of pre-bracero migration: the regional concentration of out-migrants from about six or seven states in the north-central region of Mexico and of in-migrants to selected areas of the U.S. west and border areas, and the concentration of Mexican workers in agriculture and in "stoop" labor. It probably also reinforced the momentum of the international migration process itself. In this respect the migration of braceros constitutes a link which establishes continuity between the first wave of Mexican migrants during the first three decades of the century and the more recent immigration of undocumented persons during the 1960s and 1970s.

Only in a formal sense is the contract labor program an aberration in the history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. The large-scale importation of contract labor from Mexico under the auspices of a binational agreement has not occurred before or since then. But in an informal sense the bracero migration reaffirms the notion that the northward movement of Mexicans is one component of a single process. The exchange between bracero and undocumented migrations has occurred first in one and then another direction, underlining the fact that the same individuals occasionally worked as braceros and as "wetbacks", depending upon formal

conditions. Finally, just as Operation Wetback expelled deportable Mexicans, resulting in a decrease in the stock of undocumented persons in the U.S. and in the return of many as contract laborers, legal immigration also began to rise, and former "wetbacks" or braceros entered the U.S. as legal permanent residents.¹⁰⁴

The impact that the bracero program had on the politics of the importation of labor and immigration is more difficult to assess. The relative power of different groups: agricultural interests, other potential employers, organized labor, Latino organizations and segments of the public that are hostile to immigration in general or who see Mexican immigration as the beginning of a new civil rights movement, is difficult to determine. Clearly these political relationships are not the same today as they were in 1942 or even in 1964.

Notwithstanding this, it can be said that the program crystallized the opposition of organized labor and the Mexican community in the U.S. against any form of labor importation. The bracero program, which unquestionably resulted in adverse effects and serious abuses cannot be forgotten. It is this model which is considered a prototype of what any future labor program should not, but could become. Given the nature of the coalition that brought an end to the bracero program in the 1960s,¹⁰⁵ one might expect strong opposition to any program that resembles a bracero program from organized labor, Chicano organizations and liberal groups.

¹⁰⁴Galarza, 1964, p. 250.

¹⁰⁵See the list of anti-bracero organizations presented in Craig, 1971, pp. 161-162, 175-176, 197.

The implications that the program has for U.S.-Mexican relations point toward conflict rather than cooperation, especially with regards to the issue of controlling trans-border migration. The diplomatic confrontation of January, 1954 is particularly revealing of what could happen: in order to apply pressure on Mexico the U.S. could adopt what at present would seem to be an unusual position: an "open border." Since 1954 the Mexican government has discovered that it has little control over the process; to negotiate an agreement would make it vulnerable to pressures of this type which could on the one hand, make such an agreement superfluous, and on the other, apply pressure for concessions on non-migration related issues. Finally, future requests by the U.S. government to cooperate with efforts to control trans-border migration would be likely to be denied, given the lessons of 1954. Yet, such cooperation would most likely be necessary to make a future program work.

The history of the Mexican contract labor program is particularly instructive with respect to the elements essential to the successful operation of such a program. The most important element seems to be the acceptance of the terms of the program by the employer; the second most important element seems to be their acceptance by the employee. When these became noxious to either of these parties during the bracero program, the result was a growth of undocumented at the expense of contract labor migration. The bracero program never eliminated the employment of undocumented migrants entirely, though both forms of employment were clearly perceived by employers and employees as mutual alternatives.

One could venture to speculate, based upon the conflicts and ex-

periments of the years 1947-54, that if the costs of contract labor are high relative to those of undocumented labor, employers will opt for the latter. If the terms of the contract are too restrictive for the workers once they enter the U.S., they will leave their place of work and look for it elsewhere as undocumented immigrants. The bracero program "worked" after 1954, not because Operation Wetback expelled all the undocumented Mexicans to be found, but because the program was packaged in a more attractive manner for employers. At the time when bracero contracting was at its peak, 1956-59, the cost and attractiveness of bracero labor was not very different from what the same had been for "wetback" labor.

The search for alternatives to bracero labor after 1964 led growers to consider mechanization, in certain crops, and the promotion of legal immigration of Mexicans or the renewed employment of undocumented migrants in others. The search for an alternative to bracero emigration led the Mexican government to establish the *Programa Nacional Fronterizo (ProNaF)* and to encourage the importation of jobs in the form of assembly plants along the U.S.-Mexican border. Ironically, the present search by U.S. policy-makers for an alternative to undocumented migration from Mexico seems to be leading them back to another bracero program.

APPENDIX 1

- DATAM Dirección de Asuntos de Trabajadores Agrícolas Migratorios, of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Federal agency responsible for the administration of the contract labor program in its recruitment phases.
- DOL Department of Labor.
- INS Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice. Federal agency responsible for the control of immigration, first according to the 1917 Immigration Act and later pursuant to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. Its responsibilities under Public Law 78 were minor.
- SRE Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Mexican ministry of foreign relations.
- USES U.S. Employment Service of the Department of Labor. Federal agency principally responsible for the administration of the contract labor program, from the selection of candidates at the Mexican recruitment centers to the certifications of need issued to employers.

APPENDIX 2

Chronology of Mexican Contract Labor Program

- 1942 August 4 Executive agreement made effective between the U.S. and Mexico to contract agricultural workers. Appropriations out of President's Emergency Fund.
- 1943 April 26 Executive agreement renewed.
April 29 Public Law 45 enacted, provided appropriations for agreement of 4/26. Administration of program passed to War Food Administration and Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture. Also: Non-agricultural (railroad) worker agreement entered between Mexico and the U.S.
December 23 Public Law 217 extended Farm Labor Supply Program from December 31, 1943 to January 31, 1944.
- 1944 February 14 Public Law 229, Farm Labor Supply Appropriations Act enacted.
- 1945 December 28 Public Law 269, extended authority of program through December 31, 1946.
- 1946 July 23 Public Law 521, extended appropriations of program to June, 1947
August 9 Public Law 707 enacted, first legislative authority for farm worker program; program no longer operating on basis of war-time emergency.
August 25 U.S. Embassy formally instructed to wind railroad program down.
November 25 Department of State notifies Mexico of desire to end war-time agreement in 90 days.
- 1947 March 10 Bilateral agreement renewed. New provisions on legalization of "wetbacks" already in U.S. and on issue of black-listing areas from receiving bracero labor. First time Mexico allows braceros to be used in State of Texas.
April 28 Public Law 40 enacted, extended farm labor program to December 31, 1947.
September 26 Ban on contract labor to Texas renewed by Mexican government.

APPENDIX 2 continued
Chronology of Mexican Contract Labor Program

- 1948 February 21 Reinstated bracero program after it had lapsed in December, 1947. Superseded agreements of April 26, 1943 and March 10, 1947. Ended process of legalization of "wetbacks" first permitted by March 10, 1947 agreement.
- July 3 Public Law 893 enacted. Authorized Federal Security Agency to recruit foreign workers and administer program until June 30, 1949.
- October 13-
October 23 "First open border incident." Due to differences of positions in negotiations, El Paso INS unilaterally opens border for brief period to allow illegal entrants in, legalizes them as contract workers and distributes them among New Mexico and Texas farmers. Mexico abrogates treaty on Oct. 18, U.S. delivers formal apology and Mexico accepted it on Oct. 23.
- 1949 August 1 New agreement on agricultural labor reached by U.S. and Mexico. Included clauses denying certification of employers who continued to use "wetbacks" eliminating Mexican practice of unilateral blacklisting, and legalized "wetbacks" as braceros who had entered prior to that date.
- 1950 June 3 Truman signs executive order creating President's Commission on Migratory Labor.
- July 26 New agreement to not contract laborers from interior of Mexico but to legalize "wetbacks" already in U.S.
- 1951 January -
February Under pressure from growers associations, U.S. government opens negotiations for renewal of contract labor program. Mexico indicates willingness to consider if there is a return to the war-time government-to-government program and if contracting supervised by a federal agency.
- March 26 Report of President's Commission on Migratory Labor transmitted to Truman.
- July 12 Public Law 78 enacted to administer a government-to-government contract labor program. Extended three times with little difficulty: August 8, 1953, August 9, 1955, August 27, 1958. The last extension was scheduled to expire on June 30, 1961.
- August Agreement reached between Mexico and U.S. on a new contract labor program.
- 1952 March 20 Public Law 283 enacted, legislating sanctions against those who willfully import, transport or harbor illegal aliens.

APPENDIX 2 continued
Chronology of Mexican Contract Labor Program

- 1952 June 12 Agreement on workers renewed. Renewed four times
(cont.) in a routine fashion: March 10, 1954, December
23, 1955, December 20, 1956, and August 31, 1959.
Latter agreement scheduled to expire on June 30,
1961. During the internal debate in the U.S.
where an agreement to end Public Law 78 was finally
reached, the international agreements with Mexico
were extended to December, 1961, January 31, 1962,
December 31, 1963 and December 31, 1964.
- June 27 The Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as
the McCarran-Walter Act or Public Law 414 was
passed over Truman's veto. This law superseded
the 1917 and 1924 Acts, but continued many of
their features, including a quota for non-western
Hemisphere country immigrants.
- September 4 Appointment of President's Commission on Immigra-
tion and Naturalization.
- 1953 January 1 Report submitted by President's Commission on Immi-
gration and Naturalization.
- August Attorney General Herbert Bronwill made a tour of
inspection along U.S.-Mexican border.
- 1954 January 15- "Second open border incident." Negotiations suspended
Februray 5 by U.S. on January 15, and Departments of Labor,
Justice and State announced unilateral recruitment to
begin on January 18. Strong Mexican response, call
for a halt to emigration. Incidents in Tijuana and
Mexicali. On February 2 Comptroller-General advises
Department of Labor that Public Law 78 funds could not
legally be spent on unilateral recruiting. Unilateral
recruiting suspended on February 5.
- March 16 Public Law 309 enacted. (House Joint Resolution 355.)
Amended Public Law 78 (of July, 1951) providing for
unilateral importation of foreign workers if bilateral
negotiations broke down.
- April General Joseph Swing appointed Commissioner of Immi-
gration and Naturalization.
- June 17 Operation Wetback begins, resulting in arrest of 57,000
deportable Mexicans in California in June and July.
- 1955 April 14 U.S. and Mexico conclude an agreement on illegal en-
trants to U.S.

APPENDIX 2 continued
Chronology of Mexican Contract Labor Program

- 1956 Spring Publication of *Strangers in our fields* by Ernesto Galarza, documenting widespread violations of international agreement by public officials and employers, and abuses of bracero system. Translated and published as *Trabajadores mexicanos en tierra extraña* in 1958.
- December Department of Labor issued new regulations designed to improve housing for contract workers.
- 1958 July - September Department of Labor instituted new formula for determining prevailing wage to diminish adverse effect of bracero contracting, and a new method to determine piece rates so that minimum hourly rate of bracero contract upheld.
- 1959 October Consultants' Report published by the Bureau of Employment Security, Department of Labor, recommending that use of braceros be restricted and powers of Secretary of Labor to protect domestic workers and set minimum standards be expanded.
- November New regulations setting minimum standards for working conditions involving domestic farm-workers recruited through farm placement service of Labor Department.
- 1960 September 1 Public Law 78 extended for six months, to December 31, 1961.
- 1961 October 4 Public Law 78 extended for two more years after bitter debate and some reluctance by Kennedy Administration.
- 1963 June 21 Diplomatic dispatch from Mexican to U.S. government argued for extension of program. Dispatch made public by Senator William Fulbright on August 15.
- October 31 Final extension of Public Law 78 by Congress. Program terminated on December 31, 1964.

SOURCES: Craig (1971), Galarza (1964) Kirstein (1977) and McCain (1970).

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