

present government, and its propaganda reflects an increasing adherence to the Communist line. At the end of November, a G.S.L. congress broke up when Hussen, the party's president, and Vice-President Banafunzi read each other out of the party.

It is rumored that the rift occurred over accusations that Hussen was selling out Islam to Peking. However, leaflets printed in Arabic (there is no written Somali language at present) and distributed with the breakfast grapefruit in the dining room of Mogadiscio's new Hotel Giuba next day attributed the trouble to the machinations of "American imperialists."

AT THE MOMENT, the government is doing its best to follow a policy of "positive neutrality," reliance on the U.N., and nonalignment with either the West or the East. Its efforts to build a sound economy against the odds of relentless nature are almost entirely dependent on governmental foreign aid and private foreign-capital investments. The only miracle that could save the economy without this would be the discovery of oil. After fruitless tries by U.S. and Italian oilmen for the past five years, traces of oil are said to have been found near the port of Merca, not far from Mogadiscio. This location would make the construction of wells profitable—always provided that more than one vein could be tapped.

The Soviet Union, Poland, Albania, Sweden, Ghana, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Bulgaria are all in the process of establishing embassies in Mogadiscio. The present diplomatic corps includes the United States, Great Britain, Italy, France, West Germany, and, more recently, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Republic. In its efforts to steal the initiative in Africa from the Soviets, Communist China has not only played host to parties of students and individual pilgrims but has already made a major capital investment in Somalia. It is just a matter of time before a Chinese embassy, with its inevitable train of technical experts and propaganda and a corps of Chinese Moslem teachers, will be carrying the torch to the bush.

# The Grapes of Wrath, Vintage 1961

ARNOLD MAYER

WASHINGTON  
AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK on the hot August night that proved to be the last of the Eighty-sixth Congress, Arizona's eighty-three-year-old Carl Hayden was on the Senate floor pleading for a six-month extension of the Mexican farm-labor importation law.

The Hayden speech marked the first defeat ever experienced by the grower organizations of this country on a farm-labor issue. Up to then, the growers' Congressional supporters had been able to extend this nine-year-old law for two years at a time.

Now that the Eighty-seventh Congress has convened, we can expect the battle over the program incorporated in Public Law 78 to resume, with church, labor, small-farm, and civic groups—who believe that P.L. 78 is an abomination—pitted against



the grower organizations—who believe it provides a necessary source of labor.

The fight promises to be bitter. Both sides recognize that in this battle lies the key to whether America's 2,300,000 farm workers—probably the most poverty-stricken, depressed, and exploited group in our country—can get the kind of protection from which other Americans have long benefited.

Under P.L. 78, a total of 437,600 Mexican farm workers, known as braceros, were imported for seasonal work in 1959, mostly by growers of cotton, vegetables, fruits, and sugar beets. These growers represent less than two per cent of America's farmers and are chiefly concentrated in

California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Arkansas. But their farms, mainly large-scale operations, provide a disproportionate source of agricultural employment in the United States.

The huge influx of braceros has made it possible for these growers to keep wages down. (American farm workers earned an average of only \$829 and got an average of only 138 days of work in 1959.) If domestic farm workers refuse the wage rate offered, the grower need not raise it. He tells the Federal government that he is unable to get workers (true, at his wage scale), and he then gets a group of braceros.

The effect on farm-labor income has been disastrous. Wages for field labor in most of Texas have stayed at the same level for nearly a decade—about fifty cents an hour. Wages for cotton harvesting—cotton is the chief crop on which braceros are used—have even dropped in recent years, and cotton chopping pays as low as thirty cents an hour in many areas of Arkansas.

## 'We Rent Our Slaves'

More than 60,000 farm workers migrate from their homes in Texas to harvest crops in other states at the same time some 180,000 braceros are imported to harvest the crops in Texas. The growers say Americans will not perform "stoop labor." But the same growers use tens of thousands of braceros in a number of skilled jobs.

The bracero also gets some benefits denied the domestic farm worker. He receives a minimum wage of fifty cents an hour, while many U.S. migrants work for as little as thirty cents an hour. The braceros are guaranteed employment for at least three-quarters of their contract period; they also get free transportation to the job and various housing advantages. The domestic farm workers, however, have none of these



guarantees. Amendments to P.L. 78 to provide American agricultural labor with the same benefits and guarantees as the braceros have been defeated in the House at least twice.

If braceros get better conditions than domestic farm workers, why does the grower prefer them? There are several important reasons. First, the bracero importation creates a surplus of labor that keeps all farm-labor wages low. Then, the braceros come alone instead of with their families, so that the grower saves money on housing. Also, the extreme poverty of rural Mexico brings prime bracero labor willing to work at fifty cents an hour. And, finally, the bracero is far more docile than the American migrant. The threat of being sent back to Mexico is enough to bring him into line if he complains too much about conditions.

A recent report prepared for the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor puts the matter succinctly: "The foreign migrant is indentured to a particular farmer or farm association for the duration of his contract. One grower, speaking of the Mexican farm labor program, said that 'we used to own slaves, now we rent them from the government.'"

SOME MEXICAN farm labor has been used in the United States, legally or illegally, on an organized or unorganized basis, for decades. When in the late 1940's the illegal border crossings by the so-called wetbacks became an increasing problem, the growers saw an opportunity to get an organized government-sponsored labor-importation program, such as they had during the Second World War. Arguing that "controlled importation" was the answer to the wetback problem and that a shortage of farm labor existed because of the Korean War, the growers secured the enactment of P.L. 78 in 1951. The so-called "temporary program," which legalized the wetback migrations, was renewed in 1954, 1956, and 1958.

The period between the third renewal in 1958 and the fourth renewal attempt in 1960 was a time of increased government and public concern about farm workers. Information reaching Secretary of Labor

James P. Mitchell on the Mexican farm-labor program prompted an investigation. The investigation led to a shutdown of several bracero camps and improvements in others, and Mitchell began to take an increasing interest in farm-labor problems—more than any previous Secretary of Labor.

In 1959, he appointed four distinguished citizens to study P.L. 78 and its administration. Their unanimous report urged specific changes in the law. In essence, they recommended (1) real protection against the adverse effect on the employment



and wages of domestic farm workers caused by the importation of Mexicans; (2) a guarantee of at least the same benefits for domestic workers as for braceros; and (3) limitation of the bracero program to unskilled seasonal jobs on nonsurplus crops.

While the consultants were working on their report, Secretary Mitchell established regulations for the recruitment of domestic farm workers by the U.S. Employment Service. These regulations dealt with wages, housing, and transportation. Their net effect was to prevent the USES, a tax-financed public agency, from being used to undercut prevailing area wages and other conditions for migrants. Weak as they were, these regulations brought loud howls of "socialism" and "government interference" from the growers and their supporters in Congress.

### In Dubious Battle

When the 1960 session of Congress opened, the growers struck the first blow. A number of Republican and Southern Democratic congressmen, including the chairman of the House Agriculture subcommittee, E. C. Gathings (D., Arkansas), introduced nearly identical bills to extend

P.L. 78. Actually, the measures would have made conditions far worse for farm workers than they already are. As it turned out, this was a serious mistake on the growers' part: they overplayed their hand.

The groups hoping for improvements in P.L. 78 waited for the Labor Department to offer a reform bill on behalf of the Eisenhower administration. Their wait was in vain: the department's bill was shelved within the administration—thanks to the efforts of the defenders of corporation agriculture, led by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson and White House Administrative Assistant Jack Z. Anderson, himself a California grower who has made use of braceros.

With the hearings of the House Agriculture subcommittee only a week away, those who opposed P.L. 78 seemed at a hopeless disadvantage. They had no plan of action, no organized effort, and no bill to support. But the extreme provisions of the growers' bills and the unexpected failure of the Labor Department to introduce any bill shocked them into action. George McGovern (D., South Dakota), a young and able member of the House Agriculture Committee, agreed to introduce a reform measure.

The McGovern bill incorporated the four consultants' recommendations, some verbatim. And it provided for a gradual ending of P.L. 78, as had been suggested in a resolution by the general board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States.

It was an uphill fight. On occasions such as these the American Farm Bureau Federation, one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the capital, applies intense pressure. Industrialized agriculture joins with canners and processors to exert maximum influence on congressmen. By themselves, voteless farm workers are no match for such powerful forces, and this disparity is the major reason for the absence of protective legislation for agricultural labor.

But in the P.L. 78 fight of 1960 the growers, canners, and processors were opposed by a number of organizations that were working to give farm workers a better deal. They were religious groups, such as the National Council of the Churches of Christ and the National Catholic



Welfare Conference. They were labor unions, led by the AFL-CIO and its Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen. They were civic groups, such as the National Consumers League and Americans for Democratic Action. They were the small farmers, represented by the National Farmers Union. And they were the groups specifically and solely concerned with the plight of farm workers, such as the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor and the National Sharecroppers Fund.

Within Congress, the growers were in a good position. Some very important Southerners and Republicans were ready to lead their battle. Their control of the Agriculture Committees, where the legislation had to originate, seemed unshakable. And they counted on being able to invoke the tremendous power of the Republican-Southern Democratic coalition when the going got rough.

On the liberal side of Congress, P.L. 78 reform had to compete with far more potent political issues for the attention and concern of legislators. Although sympathetic to the exploited farm workers, many of the embattled liberal congressmen felt they had better concentrate on the mass of social legislation that, unlike P.L. 78, would immediately affect the voters of their districts.

During the seven-month fight in 1960, the Congressional supporters of both the growers and the reform groups had to change their strategy and their objectives. It soon became apparent to the legislators seeking reform that they did not have the strength to pass the McGovern bill. Therefore they concentrated on blocking the growers' bill, planning to resume the fight for reform in 1961, when they hoped a new administration would support them in the battle.

**T**HE EISENHOWER administration's "position" on P.L. 78 was a study in ineffectualness. A bitter fight continued within the administration after Mitchell was stopped from supporting the introduction of a reform bill: the Labor Department wanted administration support for P.L. 78 reforms, the Agriculture Department wanted support for the growers' bills.

The House hearings on P.L. 78 brought a showdown. A compromise was reached between the departments—and it provided against any action. The administration urged that consideration of P.L. 78 legislation be postponed until 1961. Mitchell also agreed that he would not push for an agricultural minimum wage or any other farm-labor legislation in 1960.

As it turned out, the administration could not stand firm on P.L. 78. When the reform groups sought to keep the growers' bill in the House Rules Committee—a way of assuring no action in 1960—the administration either would not or could not do anything. During the debate in the House of Representatives the White House was silent. Only a letter from Secretary Mitchell restated the view of the



"administration and the Labor Department." But congressmen—especially the Republicans—knew that this was more the position of the Labor Department than of the administration. As a result, very few Republicans opposed the growers' renewal bill.

The growers' support in the two houses' Agriculture Committees was a huge stumbling block for the reform groups. Hearings were held before a House subcommittee strongly partisan to the growers' cause. Some subcommittee members competed with grower witnesses in lambasting "do-gooders" and "government bureaucrats."

Not surprisingly, the House Agriculture Committee approved the

growers' bill, although three members—McGovern, Merwin Coad (D., Iowa), and Lester Johnson (D., Wisconsin)—submitted a devastating minority report.

"The moral implications of [the bill] are shocking," the three congressmen concluded. "It would literally increase the destitution, the underemployment, and the exploitation of 2,300,000 domestic farm-workers, who are the poorest of poor in our nation. It would put the family farm at a further competitive disadvantage. It would increase the stain Public Law 78 has already placed on our national values and prestige."

### An Uneasy Truce

The Congressional supporters of reform were forced to fall back on delaying tactics. These, along with some fortuitous circumstances, held up action in the House of Representatives until nearly the end of the regular 1960 session. A bill providing for a two-year extension of P.L. 78 without any of the growers' changes was considered by the House in late June.

The reforms of the McGovern bill, offered by Representative John Fogarty (D., Rhode Island), were defeated by a 2-1 margin. Similarly trounced was an attempt by Representative Alfred Santangelo (D., New York) to deny braceros to cotton producers, the lowest-paying farmers and largest single users of foreign workers. The unamended two-year extension of P.L. 78 was finally passed by the House.

Then late in August, in the special session of Congress, the Senate Agriculture Committee suddenly and unexpectedly reported out a bill giving P.L. 78 a six-month extension, brushing aside the reform bill sponsored by Eugene McCarthy (D., Minnesota) and nine other senators. This happened after the growers' Senatorial supporters had summarily taken the House-passed bill from the subcommittee headed by Hubert Humphrey and, without hearings or previous announcements, brought it before the full Senate Agriculture Committee for consideration.

At this stage, the six-month bill was a possible trap. It seemed reasonable, but the liberals knew that Congressional procedures would give



the growers ample opportunity to turn six months into two years again in the House-Senate conference committee. A bipartisan group decided to block the Agriculture Committee's bill with a Senate filibuster, if necessary, and made their intentions fully known. For all practical purposes, the bill seemed to be quite dead.

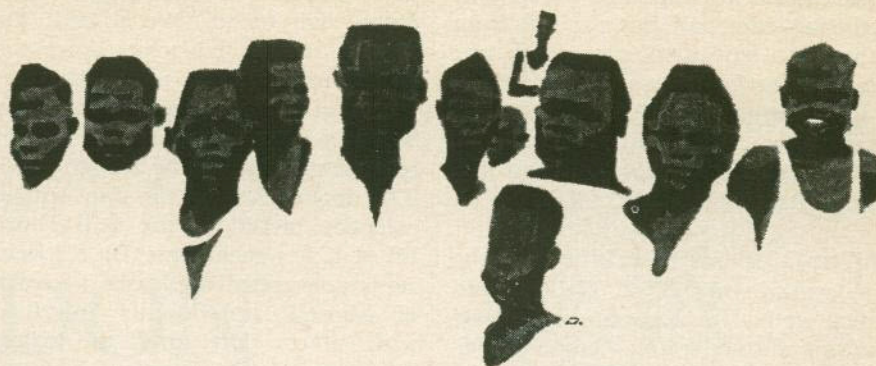
But strange things happen during the last days of a Congressional session. Senator Hayden's attempted face-saving action for the growers on the last evening was such an oddity. After a brief debate in which the reform forces showed that their surprise did not diminish their determination to block a two-year extension of P.L. 78, an agreement was reached. Senators Hayden and Allen Ellender of Louisiana, chairman of the Agriculture Committee, agreed that six months would be the limit of the extension. They further agreed that the abuses, reform, and extension of P.L. 78 would be considered in thorough hearings in 1961. In return, the liberals agreed not to block the six-month extension which carried P.L. 78 through the harvest season until December 31, 1961.

The maneuvering had ended in a definite if not complete victory for the anti-P.L. 78 forces. They had prevented the Farm Bureau from upsetting Secretary Mitchell's interstate recruitment regulations. They had prevented the growers from giving the Secretary of Agriculture joint administration over P.L. 78 with the Secretary of Labor. They had cut down the extension from two years to six months. But most important, they had shown that the growers' lobby was not invincible.

Obviously a bitter fight will take place over P.L. 78 legislation in 1961. As one Farm Bureau lobbyist has said, "We want one more extension. After that, mechanization may have made the bracero program unnecessary."

**C**AN A VICTORY be won for reform? A great deal depends upon the stand of the Kennedy administration. If it pushes the reforms, then their passage is likely. If it does not, then the reform groups will be faced with the same problems they had in 1960.

## VIEWS & REVIEWS



### 'The Kingdom of Schweitzer'

MORTON PUNER

**T**HE VISIT I made to Albert Schweitzer in Africa last summer was a business trip of sorts. In 1959, thirteen-year-old Robert Hill of Waycross, Georgia—the son of an Air Force sergeant stationed in Naples—had written a letter to his father's general requesting help in getting medicine to Dr. Schweitzer in Africa "in the cause of peace." The letter was read over Italian radio, the boy appeared on Italian television, and some \$400,000 worth of medical supplies were contributed to the undertaking. French and Italian planes joined in a NATO airlift to Lambaréne with Bobby Hill aboard to deliver the supplies personally to Dr. Schweitzer. The affair was given a good deal of attention by the press in Italy and Africa as well as the United States. The fact that Bobby Hill is a Negro—poised and personable, the son of an airman in the integrated armed services—was certainly not concealed in any of the press releases that were handed out at the time.

The 1959 trip was so successful that Pentagon officials decided to try it again in 1960. Bobby and his father were summoned from their home in Naples to Washington. The boy was greeted by Air Force Chief of Staff Thomas D. White, given a Presidential citation at the White House, and put aboard a C-130 to deliver additional supplies and lab-

oratory equipment to Dr. Schweitzer. The donors this time, "in the name of the American people," were the International Latex Corporation and the Medical International Cooperation Organization, better known as Dr. Tom Dooley's MEDICO. Since I had written one of the articles about the 1959 Bobby Hill airlift, I was invited to accompany this second mission.

No one had any illusions about the trip. It was an all-out public-relations effort on the part of the U.S. Air Force to project the best image of America. Word had gone out from the Pentagon to meet the Bobby Hill plane at each stop. Sergeant Hill was assigned to accompany his son to keep him combed, scrubbed, and pressed. At each base along the way, the commanding officer was on hand to be photographed shaking hands with Bobby underneath the inscription on the plane: "To Dr. Schweitzer and the People of Gabon—'With Love'—from Robert Hill, and the American People." (After the picture-taking sessions, Bobby and his father were usually packed off to the nearest non-com transient quarters to await their next call to duty.)

Evreux Air Base in France was our last stop before Africa. There we were joined for the trip south by a movie photographer, a still photographer, and a radio man flown in