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BAKERSFIELD 5-6292

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D. C.

THE WHITE HOUSE
March 6, 1954
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RECEIVED

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear President Eisenhower:

This is to respectfully request that you veto H. J. Res. 355 relating to unilateral agreement for the importation of Mexican farm laborers.

I do so somewhat reluctantly because I have farmer friends in my district who feel that this legislation is necessary to a proper solution of their labor problems. I do not question their sincerity. I do question their estimate of the availability of domestic farm labor in this country. In the light of undisputed reports of growing unemployment in all categories of labor including farm labor I would be abdicating fair judgment if I found any necessity for enactment of this bill; moreover I would be deserting all reasonable concepts of humanitarianism and legislative objectivity if I failed to oppose it. I apologize to my friends for our difference of opinion.

I would preface further remarks on the substance of the situation by qualifying myself as somewhat of an expert on the subject of agricultural labor. I represent a great three-county agricultural area. Therein we grow almost every variety of crop which contributes to our national food and fiber requirements and some of these crops are almost exclusively grown in my district. I am familiar with the recent history of labor supply and demand with respect to the production and harvesting of these groups. Truck, tree fruit and vine crops require a lot of hand labor. The production and harvesting of cotton requires a great deal of hand labor. In the early thirties depression and drought in the great Southwest displaced a great many of the good people in the States of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and New Mexico. These people came to California seeking jobs and until the outset of World War II constituted almost the

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sole source of the labor necessary for such crops. In the course of time many of these fine people settled on the land and have become successful entrepreneurs in our economy but there are many of them who have never ceased doing farm labor and they have continued to supply a good portion of our farm labor requirement. This requirement has declined by reason of mechanization and this fact plus the fact that emigres to our cities are available for peak agricultural employment has resulted in the establishment of a most stable relationship between employment demand and supply met largely out of the labor pool created by the influx of people I have mentioned. These are the people who lose jobs to imported laborers in time of job shortages.

The timing of this legislation is extremely bad. It can be justified only on the basis of labor shortage. In my opinion this shortage does not presently exist in my area of California; moreover, I question the validity of a conclusion of shortage in any other area because like growers in other areas some of my growers insist they have a labor shortage in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. I voted for 1953 legislation continuing the treaty arrangement. In my opinion that is the only proper method to handle a real labor shortage.

We have heard a great deal of talk about wetbacks, so-called by reason of illegal entrance into this country. This bill is speciously described as a solution to the wetback problem. I certainly reject this argument. I would hate to conclude that a great country like the United States could only close its borders to illegal entrants by the device of offering jobs to foreigners, jobs which are needed by our own people. Those who hold such an opinion have small faith in our institutions. If there is any truth in this conclusion we are, indeed in trouble because the Justice Department recently reported that over 100 past and present Communists cross the border daily in this horde of legal and illegal Mexican laborers.

In Fresno and Kings Counties there are oversupplies of farm laborers.

If local people are unemployed by lack of jobs it makes no

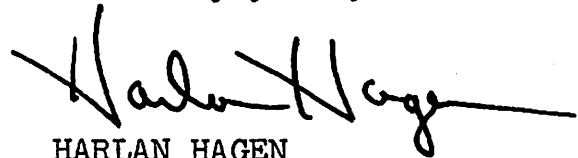
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difference whether available jobs are being filled by aliens legally in the United States or illegally in the United States. In either event the local citizen is just as unemployed, just as broke, just as hungry, just as susceptible to an economic urge to rob or steal.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harlan Hagen", written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

HARLAN HAGEN
Member of Congress

HH:mm

WHCF

Box 634

6F 124-C Migratory Labor (1)