

EXCLUSIVE**LATIN AMERICA**

The Fraud Of Carter's 'Illegals' Program

On August 4 President Carter announced his Administration's long delayed program to crack down on undocumented workers in the U.S. — the so-called illegals. It is a policy, based on false premises, which offers only dubious "benefits" to U.S. workers and illegals, and brutally attacks the economies of sender countries, particularly Mexico.

The Administration has been understandably reluctant to bring the policy into the light of day and is now doing everything it can to portray the program as a "soft" and "humanitarian" response to a problem whose only other solution would be "mass deportation." Mexico, for one, is not buying the line but has very little leverage to force a reversal of what Carter terms the "aggressive and comprehensive steps" of the Administration policy.

The Administration proposals can be broken down into four areas:

* *Sanctions on employers.* Employers would be obligated to check identification of all workers. If they knowingly hire an illegal, they would be subject to fines of up to \$1,000. Any person who received pay for placing an illegal in a job would face criminal penalties.

* *Tightening up the border.* The Southwest Border Patrol personnel would be doubled to 4,000 as a first step.

* *"Adjustment of status" for illegals now in the country.* Those who can prove continuous residence since 1970 would receive permanent resident visas; those who entered between 1970 and Jan. 1, 1977 would be eligible for a new "nondeportable status" which would allow them to work in the U.S. without deportation for a maximum of 5 years. Those entering after Jan. 1, 1977 would be deported as currently mandated.

* *Aid to sender countries.* The Administration's proposals dwell on one theme: labor-intensive work projects.

To these four areas a fifth, not yet officially announced area should be added: the creation of a "super-agency" which would consolidate all border policing and inspection functions. According to an Aug. 9 *Los Angeles Times* report, such a superagency proposal is being drafted on Carter's request and would merge eight agencies in seven departments taking part in border operations, from policing illegal aliens to drug control and Customs.

Contradictions

What prompted the Administration to take these "aggressive and comprehensive steps"? The President, in his August 4 message to Congress, devotes only one sentence to an answer: the illegals have "breached our nation's immigration laws, displaced many American citizens from jobs, and placed an increased financial burden on many states and local governments."

Yet the very information provided by the government

to back up the Administration's program contradicts or undermines these assertions. A White House memo to newspaper editors dated August 5 states that the charge "that undocumented aliens drain our tax dollars through social services" would be "difficult to document." The memo proceeds to explain the variety of reasons why illegals "are not now a major drain on public assistance programs paid for by taxpayers...." In addition, it notes, "Labor Department studies have shown that most undocumented aliens pay more in federal and social security taxes than they use in social services."

On the question of illegals taking away jobs from U.S. citizens, the White House memo states, "Again, there is a lack of accurate data." A single 1976 Labor Department study is cited which indicates "that undocumented aliens appear to increase the supply of low-wage labor and thus compete with disadvantaged U.S. workers."

Politics of a Labor Front

The question has to be asked why the Administration is giving so much attention to an issue which by its own admission is largely fraudulent.

The answer is contained in the overall package of labor measures now being prepared to create the Administration's "full employment program." It is highly significant that the President's illegals program was finally released the week he also announced his proposals for Welfare reform. Removing as many illegals as possible from low-paying jobs and carefully monitoring those who remain will be a significant element in the Administration's efforts to create low-pay, low-skill armies of U.S. workers within an increasingly energy-deficient and de-industrialized depression economy.

Historically, illegals have taken the menial jobs which U.S. workers avoid if they have any choice — bus boys, dishwashers, domestics, and stoop agricultural laborers. There is no evidence whatever (see Cornelius memo, EIR No. 22, May 29, 1977) that a significant portion of illegals hold down well-paying skilled jobs otherwise open to U.S. workers. The only kind of jobs which may be opened up by the anti-illegals drive is "recycled" menial jobs. Secretary of Labor Marshall, asked by press in an August 4 briefing what the Administration planned to do with the "H-2" program of temporary workers which supplies labor to South and Southwest agriculture, answered that the government should be able to continue "greatly restricting the number (of workers) that are coming in, because we do believe that it is possible, with systematic search, to get people in this country to do most of that work."

One NAACP leader in Washington, D.C., interviewed by the *Washington Star*, commented on such Administration efforts: "It's just my personal feeling but I

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think maybe blacks have paid their dues in those menial jobs.”

Many labor leaders have apparently fallen for Administration pledges to enforce minimum wage and related work provisions more strenuously as a corollary to the anti-illegals program. They should note carefully the Administration's logic in opposing further hikes in the minimum wage in debate this week. The Administration argued that a higher minimum wage will take away jobs in businesses bankrupted by increased labor costs.

Labor leaders should also recognize that behind the illegals question stands a concerted effort by Administration officials and influential pro-Carter press to force through a national work card system which has a chilling precedent in Nazi Germany. Secretary of Labor Marshall is on record as favoring such a work card. White House documents released to back up the Administration's program are not reassuring on this point. They state that “the judgment was that the enormous financial and civil liberties costs of creating such a card outweighed its potential benefits at this time.” James Reston of the *New York Times* is in the forefront of the press spokesmen, including the *Washington Post*, which have responded to Carter's program with a call for a universal ID system — an intermediate step toward a national work card.

Most employers are opposed to the Carter program for

obvious reasons: the illegals are among the hardest working and most poorly paid segment of the work force, doing jobs which are generally not easy to fill otherwise. Additionally, the Administration memos have indicated that enforcement of the employer sanctions “would be limited to employers who engage in a ‘pattern or practice’ of hiring undocumented aliens.” Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) chief Leonel Castillo has indicated that his department already has lists of such employers, drawn up as a “by-product” of previous INS raids. The scope for discriminatory use of such a “hit list,” especially by an Administration increasingly known for its hounding of political opponents, is significant.

Illegals: Turn Yourselves In

The final question is what is in the program for the illegals themselves? The major East Coast press, largely favorable to the Administration, has bent over backward in its reporting to highlight the so-called amnesty for large classes of illegals and all but ignored the policing features of the proposals. Yet many observers have noted that illegals under the Carter plan will get few if any benefits and would only participate if otherwise faced with massive round-ups and deportation.

The number of illegals who would receive permanent resident status is generally considered to be small — at most 500,000, according to INS director Castillo. The

Washington Post: The Curse Of Machines

In the wake of the announcement of Carter's anti-illegals program, the Mexican government has been forced to consider policies that would absorb increased labor at home without laying claim to the economically depressed country's limited supplies of capital. The answer: exactly the low-skill, labor-intensive work projects urged upon Mexico and other sender countries such as Colombia by the Carter Administration. Following are excerpts from an August 13 Washington Post OpEd by George W. Grayson, a professor at the College of William and Mary which presents the rationale for labor-intensive work projects and de-industrialization in a systematic fashion.

Like so many less-developed countries, Mexico is characterized by a sharp division between its haves and have-nots.

At a time when many Third World nations are narrowing the gap between the rich and poor, this social fissure is deepening in Mexico.

At the heart of the problem is the skill of the haves in protecting their turf. Interwoven with the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) they constantly increase their income through union and association memberships, shield themselves from the worst effect of devaluation by hoarding dollars and sending funds abroad and evade and avoid taxes to the extent that Mexicans have one of the world's lowest payment records.

Worst of all, captains of industry in Mexico have

fashioned a manufacturing sector, protected from foreign competition by quotas and import licenses, that has converted the bribery of bureaucrats from an art form to an exact science to keep the government-set prices at advantageous levels. Not only are domestically produced goods unreasonably dear — a great burden on the poor who can't preserve what little purchasing power they enjoy during current double-digit inflation — but furthermore they are produced by capital intensive methods thanks to cheap credit and a slavish devotion to the latest Western technology.

The upshot is that unemployment or underemployment afflicts two-fifths of Mexico's able workers, many of whom live in the shadows of the machines that deprive them of a livelihood. The last point has more than academic interest for the United States, because the number of unsuccessful job seekers each year is roughly 300,000 a figure equivalent to a significant portion of the illegal emigrants who annually cross the Rio Grande.

Mexico's oil wealth offers unique opportunities. Whether this windfall will simply alleviate a critical balance of payments situation and fatten the bank accounts of the rich or whether it will be used by President Lopez Portillo to bridge the gap between the affluent and the poor — most notably by 1) a realistic credit policy, 2) removal of protection from fully grown firms and 3) the creation of jobs through labor-intensive technology — remains to be seen....

overwhelming majority of illegals allegedly to benefit from the President's proposals are those who would trade in their current anonymity from law enforcement agencies for a 5-year guarantee against deportation. According to Attorney General Bell, the guarantee against deportation is bait to get illegals to register. Facing hostile questioning in an August 4 press conference, Bell stated flatly: "This temporary status means simply just that: you register." Bell added, "if you're an illegal alien and all you are getting is an opportunity to register and hope you will be treated fairly later, you wouldn't think that was amnesty." Both Bell and Labor Secretary Marshall emphasized that illegals

would also stand to gain by enforcement of minimum wage and other standards. They did not mention that many jobs for illegals will simply dry up, as marginal enterprises go bankrupt and other employers switch to more capital intensive production. Illegals who register will lack most political and civil rights, and will not be able to draw on federal assistance programs. At the end of five years, as INS head Castillo laconically admitted, the registered illegals could be "very easily targeted" and deported en masse.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the Administration program which would prevent Congress from passing restrictions on the docile labor pool formed by registered

Castillo: 'The Alternative Is Massive Deportation'

The major pro-Carter Eastern press has attempted to disarm criticism of the Carter anti-illegal program by portraying the program as the best that the illegals and Mexico can get under conditions of alleged strong anti-illegal sentiment in the U.S. It is, however, these same press outlets which are largely responsible for building up hysteria against illegals in the first place. The role of the New York Times is notorious. A New York Times news dispatch picked up by the Washington Star August 8 begins: "Tijuana — A horde of destitute migrants, estimated by police to number 200,000 to 250,000, is massed around this border city determined to reach the U.S. before Congress acts on illegal plan announced by President Carter...." Subsequent reports by the Mexican paper Novedades revealed that the Times dispatch was a fabrication.

Contrasting Carter's "soft cop" status-adjustment policy to the "hard cop" deportation threat, the New York Times has hailed its "humanity and practicality;" the Baltimore Sun called it "bold and enlightened." Immigration and Naturalization Service director Leonel Castillo, in the following interview with Excelsior's Fausto Fernandez Ponte August 7, presented the Administration's attempted "soft line" approach most blatantly.

*"Blows and Hostility Against Mexicans in U.S.,"
Admits Migration Service*

The director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the United States, Leon Castillo, admitted that his agents, as well as some state police, beat Mexican illegals and North Americans of Mexican origin, and that many of the latter have been deported to Mexico.

Uncomfortable and impatient, Castillo responded to questions in his office — in whose waiting room hangs a photograph of (Mexican) President Jose Lopez Portillo — during an interview that was requested some three months ago and which was granted now in order to explain the extent of "the Carter plan", which deprives several million people of their social benefits in exchange for not being deported.

"We know and recognize that this solution is not

the most equitable," affirmed the official, "but it is the only realistic solution possible without harming any of the countries involved, including the United States. The other alternative is massive deportation, but the return of millions of citizens to Mexico would destabilize the country, causing a revolution...."

The Reality

Castillo described, upon being questioned, these realities: "It is certain that the illegals will not have access to social benefits, to which all of us have rights, but they will be able to continue working in this country. It could become an international issue in our relations with those countries that we are denouncing as violators of (human) rights, but the truth is that there is no other alternative."

"What would you propose?" he asked the reporter.

"To give permanent residence to all, with access to all social benefits," the reporter responded.

"It's not possible, it can't be done. We don't have the votes for it. There is not the climate in the country for that. You should see the letters that I receive, the telephone calls. There is not a single person who does not call for the Army to intervene, the Air Force, massive deportation, shutting down the border. There is hostility, people are frustrated because they believe that the illegals are taking away the jobs.... As you can see, this is the most realistic solution possible without harming any of the countries involved, which are many. Some eight or ten, although we have illegals from some eighty countries. Mexico is the main one.

"It is necessary to realize that all the people here want to deport the illegals...."

The reporter suggested that the Carter plan does not attack the origins of the problem, and thus does not offer a solution, to which Castillo responded: "Each country must seek a solution until it finds it."

To a question on the methods of control of the INS and its incapacity to control the situation, Castillo responded (uncomfortably): "Well, we are cornered. Now we are just a few, but soon we will be many."

illegals, with respect to types of work and geographical area, during the period of the 5-year "guarantee" against deportation.

*The Mexican Connection:
Labor Intensive Work Camps*

There is no dispute that sender countries will be hurt by any U.S. cut-off in the "safety valve" of illegal emigration, and no country will be hurt as badly as Mexico. Half to two-thirds of the 4-5 million illegals identified by reputable estimates to be in the U.S. at any one time are Mexicans. They carry back significant earnings to Mexico and their jobs in the U.S. provide critical relief for the extremely high under- and unemployment rates in Mexico. As INS director Castillo states in the accompanying interview with the Mexican daily *Excelsior*, mass deportation of illegals would cause "a revolution" in Mexico. What he does not mention is that any program which significantly cuts off U.S. jobs and tightens the border at this time, as Mexico's economy faces its worst depression in forty years, constitutes a point of brutal pressure.

The *Wall Street Journal*, in a lengthy front page analysis of the Mexican situation August 8, emphasized the dangers of the current economic collapse. "The fear in government and diplomatic circles is that civil unrest could break out among angry workers if double-digit inflation and growing unemployment aren't eased. Many believe powerful right-wing industrialists and military leaders would welcome outbreaks of violence by workers and left-wing students as an opportunity to seize power and impose a repressive dictatorship."

In the context of this extreme vulnerability, one of the most extraordinary aspects of Carter's anti-illegal policy is the Administration's almost total disregard for serious consultations with the 9-month old government of Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo. Though Carter indicated he "welcomed" the "economic development efforts now being made by the dynamic and competent leaders of Mexico" in his remarks to newsmen Aug. 4, observers have charged that the record of his Administration on the issue is shameful. In questioning after Carter's appearance, Attorney General Bell pleaded total ignorance of Mexican government thinking on the Carter program. Secretary of Labor Marshall indicated that he had spoken with Mexican officials more extensively but that there have been no full or formal discussions. "The thing they did say to me was that they realize they had a problem."

One of the background memos circulated by the White House answers a hypothetical question about consultation with Mexico with a carefully worded: "The governments of Mexico and other source countries have been advised of this program."

If the Administration has been astonishingly blithe

about the consequences of the anti-illegals program to Mexico, the danger is acutely perceived in Mexico. President Lopez Portillo on several occasions (see interview in *U.S. News and World Report* July 4 issue, reproduced in EIR Vol. IV No. 28) has energetically protested treating illegals as a "police" problem, and various Mexican government and press figures have sharply criticized U.S. abuse of the "human rights" of illegals. Afraid to incur U.S. wrath with an open attack on the entire program, the Mexican government has released no official comment on the policy to date. However when U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Andrew Young included Mexico in his Caribbean tour last week to discuss the illegals issue, the *New York Times* reported he received a less than cordial welcome.

Where Mexico is most clearly reflecting the weight of Carter Administration pressure is in the question of labor-intensive versus capital intensive development. The White House stated explicitly in its background report that the Administration will promote aid focussed on "stimulation of labor intensive projects through multilateral lending institutions and financial assistance for the major source countries. Population education programs ... will also be made available. Increased trade with the sending countries, with emphasis on labor intensive products, will be explored — consistent with the objective of not losing U.S. jobs."

Such a labor-intensive emphasis is foreign to Mexico's historic commitment to rapid economic growth based on increased productivity, industrialization and modern technology, and there is raging debate throughout the country over precisely this issue. In recent days there are signs that the government is ceding ground. Natural Resources Minister Jose Andres de Oteyza announced August 11 that the government would provide fiscal and financial incentives to labor intensive projects over capital intensive ones, and high echelons of government are known to be considering some variant of a U.S.-modelled "full employment program" for announcement at Lopez Portillo's State of the Union Address September 1.

Yet the fight continues to be fierce. The day after Oteyza's statement, the conservative business daily *Novedades* editorially called for increasing Mexican agricultural output by putting an additional 5 million hectares under cultivation rather than concentrate human resources in unproductive labor-intensive methods in currently cultivated areas. From another perspective, but equally adamant, a spokesman for the forces associated with former president Luis Echeverria warmly endorsed a new national education plan because it would train students for a development strategy premised on "high technology." These are but the first skirmishes of a major battle.

— Tim Rush

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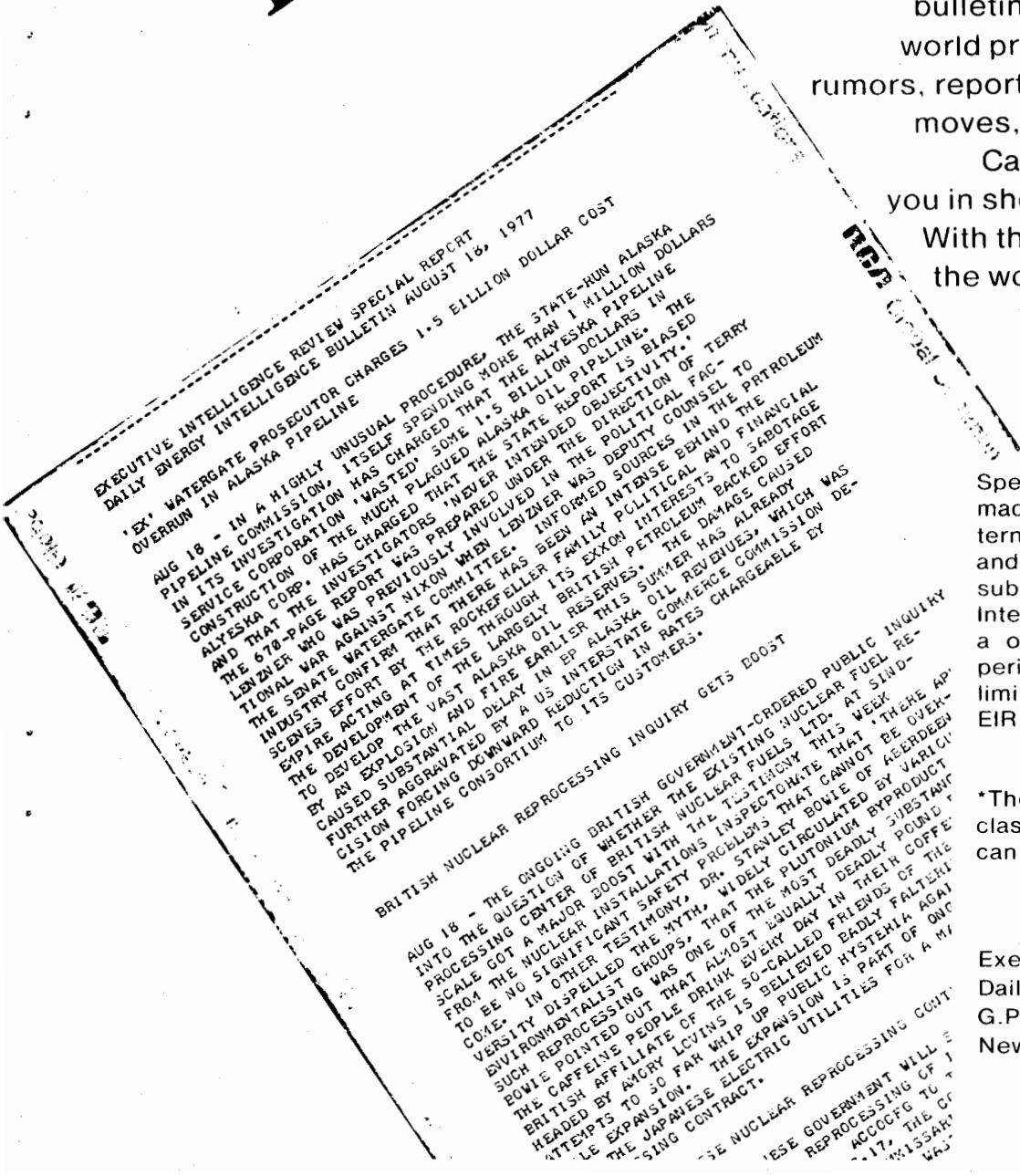
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