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American Forum of the U. S.

Veterans Family Organization

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January 13, 1961

File

Dr. Hector P. Garcia
3024 Morgan Avenue
Corpus Christi, Texas

Dear Hector:

You will recall that I talked to you over the telephone about the possibility of my attending the Conference of the Texas Committee on Migratory Labor in Austin held January 11, 1961. You encouraged me to go and I am glad you did because it was a very fruitful trip indeed.

As the Conference opened I could readily see that it was well attended by representatives from a number of churches, state officials, federal officials, the Farm Bureau, the Valley Chamber of Commerce, cattlemen and grower associations, by about eight members of Lulac and by two members of the American GI Forum, Father Juraschek and I. Fortunately, we held our own pretty well and saved the day, so to speak.

Several things happened that encouraged me. Throughout the morning and in the first hour of the afternoon session there was speech after speech setting forth the problems of the migratory workers but all of the utterances were mild, diplomatic and at times even wishy-washy. I figured that somebody had to pop off and give them the score and also figured that it had to take someone from the American GI Forum to do it, so I did.

Since Jerry Holleman, the Lulac representative and I were asked to speak on the basic social and economic problems of the migrants, it opened the way for me to tell them that the basic cause for the problems of the migrants was the vast influx of alien labor from Mexico. I also told them that our

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people were not migrants by nature or by choice; they are not gypsies; they migrate because they are displaced from their jobs by a vast supply of cheap labor from Mexico and thus our people have to take to the road to seek a living wage, that given a decent, living wage the growers could find any numbers of domestic farm workers in any area of the State. Fortunately, an AP reporter was present and he ran a story quoting me and three others which story appeared among perhaps other newspapers, in the Corpus Christi Callar-Times yesterday, January 12.

Later the whole Conference attended by I would say one hundred and fifty people was broken down into about ten sections for group conferences and recommendations for action. At the end of the day practically every sub-group conference reported that a minimum wage for farm workers was necessary and that legislation in the field of transportation, housing, health, crew leader registration and child labor and school attendance was necessary and that legislature ought to be strongly urged to legislate on these various things.

Later Father Juraschek and I cornered Col. Egon R. Tausch, Executive Secretary of the Texas Council on Migrant Labor, the one who allegedly made those very rash and stupid statements printed in the Texas Observer, and much to our satisfaction we discovered that he does not appear to have such a low opinion of our people at all. I personally told him that when I read the story in the Observer I was about to lambaste him and challenge him to a debate on the accuracy of his statements. His position was that Bob Sherrill of the Observer was very unfair to him because he misquoted him grossly. He told us positively that he specifically told Sherrill that some of the embarrassing things he discovered and talked about in the lives and behavior of the migrants were true of a minority and not the majority but the Colonel claims that the Observer made it appear the other way. He further claims that the story was very unfair to him because it led off with the caption that he was irked at the migrants and in truth and in fact he is not. I

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told him that the situation being what it was he would have to forgive my regards to have him give me his background and he obliged saying that he was born and reared in New Braunfels where at an early age he learned to speak English, German and Spanish, that after graduation from West Point he ^{learned} ~~taught~~ Spanish at the West Point Academy, that half of his military career was spent throughout Latin America doing work among Latins and that he likes the Latin culture, language and people very much otherwise as a retired colonel he would not have chosen to take his present job. He further said that he was very much enlightened by the statements that I and others had made during the conference and that he was almost in complete agreement with our position.

Father Juraschek and I determined that this guy, under proper guidance, may not be so bad after all and that it would be best to leave him on a trial basis for a longer period before we turn our guns on him.

Following our conversation I discussed the same matter over the telephone with Dr. Sanchez who agreed with us one hundred percent and said that he had been surprised by the statements he read in the Observer because they did not seem to coincide with prior statements and attitudes displayed by this fellow. Dr. Sanchez also advised that we withhold judgment and abstain from any repudiation of the man at the present time.

My personal impression is that this fellow can, to a large degree, be straightened out or shown the way by us if we keep close to him and keep him informed as to our views and activities.

While in Austin, I was able to have lunch with Jerry Holleman and discuss thoroughly the whole matter of his appointment as Assistant Secretary in the United States Department of Labor. As you probably know, it appears almost definite that Jerry will be in charge of the whole field of employment security which means that bracero contract enforcement, certification

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of braceros by the Texas Employment Commission and such things as termination of prevailing wage, among many other things, all are going to be under him and you can see where this is perhaps the biggest break that we have had regarding these questions. Jerry not only assured me that he would take our advise on personnel and procedures but he insisted on our help and cooperation with him in this entire field.

Dr. Sanchez, Father Juraschek, Holleman, Father John Wagnor and the rest of us are extremely happy over the way things are shaping up for the future, the Kennedy administration, the appointment of Jerry Holleman and the victory of Turman in the Speaker of the House race, all indicate that the many years of toil and sweat on our part is finally beginning to bear concrete results. This concludes my report to you on this trip. If you have any questions, please call me or write to me. Give my best regards to your office staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob

R. P. (Bob) Sanchez, Chairman
Committee on Migratory Labor
American GI Forum of the U. S.

RPS:gg

CC: Mr. Gilbert C. Garcia
Mr. Joe Ontiveros
Mr. Vicente T. Ximenes

Hector,
On the matter of getting named to the Committee
I discussed it with Mrs. Hodge and with Father Wagnor.
They just about assured me that they can get me or one of us
named. Hector, you mentioned the possibility of financial
aid for the trip out of 1000 club funds. I had to
fly so please send me \$15.00 to help defray my expense!

Bob